



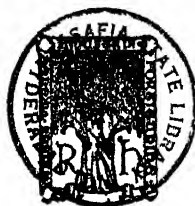
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, SEPTEMBER 1938

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

MAN OF PEACE

By
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ILLUSTRATED



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

ON August 25th, a week before the invasion of Poland and at a time when this book was nearing completion, I was called up by my unit to prosecute my own insignificant, though zealous part, in the war against Hitlerism. At that time it was clear to the subject of this book that war was, to all intents and purposes, inevitable. So strongly was Mr. Chamberlain identified in the public regard with a policy of peace, that in some quarters it was supposed that on the outbreak of war he would cease to be Prime Minister. But he had in fact already stated privately, in answer to a question put to him, that he would lead the country in war, if it became necessary for him to do so.

Mr. Chamberlain, after a long and unequal struggle bravely sustained, has lost the battle for Peace. But it is surely a case of "conquered, he triumphs." For not only has he, by a wise policy of delay, rendered the same inestimable service to his country as Fabius Maximus rendered to Rome in her protracted struggle of life and death with Carthage two thousand years ago.

He has also by his crusade for Peace awakened an echo in the heart of the people of every nation, irrespective of creed, of class, or of country. Therefore it is that in this war, more absolutely than in any other, it is clear which side strives for the right and which has sinned against the light.

Whether or not Mr. Chamberlain is a great "War Minister" the future will reveal. But, whatever its verdict, his place is assured in History and in the hearts of our generation.

November, 1939

PLAIN MAN IN POLITICS

IN History and in International politics England has always been the odd man out. It has been her habit to run counter to the European current; it has been her privilege on occasion to dam the swollen waters of that current and to abate the violence of their floods.

In the seventeenth century—the golden age of Monarchy, the epoch of *Le Roi Soleil*—this country occupied itself in executing its King for the glorification of Parliament; but when it came to a contest of arms against the forces of external Monarchy, Parliament found a soldier of genius to form a Grand Alliance and defeat those forces on the field. In the eighteenth century Europe swung with one convulsive lurch, from the extreme autocracy of monarchy to revolution, and from revolution to a new autocracy. England clung to her Parliamentary system, but found another soldier of genius—an Irish Diehard Tory this time—to lead her to victory in the field.

It was only when the Napoleonic Wars had been fought and won, and when Liberalism and Democracy were objects of fear and detestation in Europe, that Britain renewed the cautious process of social and political reform. The Great War was fought against autocracy more efficient than herself. She won without abandoning her Parliamentary system and without even the aid of a directive soldier of genius: she won because of her wisdom in having placed

herself in the hands of her people, and in giving to the masses the Government of the Country.

It is a strange record, seemingly unexpected and contrary. But fashioned on no apparent pattern of logic, it has nevertheless followed a curiously consistent development of its own. At least so it seems to Britishers. To foreigners British success has often proved as inexplicable as it has been irritating. To many of them it remains a case of "England, the unknown Isle."

And to-day? We live in a new Europe, a Europe that is trying to make the best of both worlds. The lessons of the Great War were not lost upon Herr Hitler; the propaganda of Lord Northcliffe and the rhetoric of Mr. Lloyd George were formative influences on his technique. Nor did his vigilant, and remarkably objective, observation of the decisive factors of the War overlook the great influence of President Wilson's moral generalizations. The conclusion which he drew was this: Autocracy, naked and unimaginative, must fail; but, clothed in the authority of general principles and appealing directly to the people, it may prove a potent and permanent force. Totalitarianism therefore, has tried to combine the strength of the historic irreconcilables, autocratic administration with popular support. To do this something is needed in addition to the traditional props of autocracy; efficient administration, a powerful army, and an ubiquitous police. These things may promote acquiescence, but they cannot inspire enthusiasm. Hitler and Mussolini have evolved a new technique of propaganda, of showmanship, and rhetoric. They have adapted to the service of autocracy the weapons of democracy; they have brought them into action in this alignment with a massing of force, and speed of development, a concentration of effect perhaps unprecedented in the whole of

history. In a few short years once again the face of Europe has been changed. Once again the stream has been diverted and the current flows, swift and relentless through new channels to unpredictable destinies.

To-day we live in an age of civilian and rhetorical dictators. Hitler and Mussolini attained supreme power not, like the dictators of old, on account of military achievement, but by reason of their prowess on the hustings, and their uncanny skill in propaganda. President Roosevelt—chief stalwart of Democracy in the eyes of his friends, aspirant to a veiled dictatorship according to his critics—shares their propagandist skill, and has added his own individual contribution in his "Fireside Broadcast" technique.

But once again Great Britain stood aside from the main European current. In an age of autocracy she clings to democracy; in an age of rhetoric, of pageantry, of showmanship the country, which in the nineteenth century poured out its rhetoric to an admiring world, to-day prefers to entrust its destinies to a man who is the negation of these things. Chamberlain is the odd man out. He has—not as part of his political stock-in-trade, but constitutionally—a real aversion to rhetoric, which he mistrusts and does not wholly understand; he has too the Englishman's embarrassed reluctance in face of the requirements of propaganda. He is a man incapable of self-dramatization with an instinctive preference for emotional deflation. He is eminently a practical man, happiest and most at his ease when dealing with practical problems in the light of reason. When others infuse what he considers to be misplaced passion into the discussion of practical problems he patiently endeavours to rescue reason from its enveloping clouds. It is a gift as invaluable as it is often thankless.

Mr. Chamberlain is the practical man in politics. He is also the plain man in politics. This was recognized at an early stage of his Ministerial career. Over ten years ago a commentator described him thus: "Mr. Chamberlain is the plain man in politics—his yea is yea and his nay is nay. He has a plain man's dislike of sentimentality; he is not histrionic, and has not the smallest desire to reveal the man behind the politician. He thinks, but he never thinks aloud. He is of little use to the interviewer or the press photographer. He would have the business of state carried on in the same orderly manner as Birmingham business . . . he is the statesman for the counting house."

Birmingham business and the counting house: these are, or were, his associations in the public mind. Inevitably it was said that he lacked humanity; and his appearance undoubtedly supported this theory. Formal, tightly-buttoned, sombre-clad, he gives the impression of cool and precise correctitude rather than of warm humanity. His face too, though not stern, is grave, attentive, and serious, except when his rather wintry smile gives it a hesitant half-light. His voice is dry and thin, suited to metallic recitation of fact rather than to the high notes of exhortation, or the lower cadences of a less excitable emotionalism. His manner is correct and polite rather than compelling or magnetic. He gives the impression neither of the demi-god, whom it is a privilege to worship from afar, nor of the infectious *bonhomie* that makes transient and fleeting contact a matter for emulation and a treasure for memory. He is a man who owes his position to achievement not to advertisement. He is a man who needs to be discovered since he does not proclaim himself. Unfortunately the fast-moving world of to-day does not always wait on discovery; it passes on, content with first impressions.

It is inevitable that it should be said of such a man that he lacks humanity. But is it true? He may be deficient in social graces; no doubt he does not sparkle; he is certainly without showmanship. But the still, sad music of humanity has little kinship with these things. It is bred of the understanding of the sufferings, the aspirations and the desires of ordinary muted folk. How much Neville Chamberlain had of this quality was proved in September of 1938, when, amid rumble and counter-rumble of dictatorial thunder, the still small voice of the man they thought cold and dry interpreted the desire for sanity and peace and evoked a resonant and immediate echo from human beings everywhere without limitation of language, race, or geography. Nor is he, except perhaps in appearance and to decreasing extent in manner, a cold man. Being a shy man, his geniality is reserved mainly for his intimates; but in private life the thaw is rapid, natural, and complete. There is warmth in the man, not the flames that are fanned by sudden violent gusts of passion, but the even, comforting glow that is fed by the steady pressure of humanity, duty and conviction.

Neville Chamberlain is a normal man; he is almost abnormal in his normality. Not for him the unhappy childhood, the frustrated longings, the wild imaginings of temperamental genius. His childhood, despite the early loss of his mother, was happy and spent in comfortable surroundings; his marriage, though entered into comparatively late in life, has brought him great and enduring felicity; he has not known the privations of poverty, nor the humiliation of oppression. Sorrow he has known, like other men; the early death of his mother in childbirth and of a much-loved cousin in action in France left, deep, if invisible traces. They gave too a personal impetus to two of his most cherished political objectives,

reduction in maternal mortality and the pursuit of peace. But, on the whole his personal and domestic life have been too happy to breed a fiery crusading zeal; Mr. Chamberlain's temperament and background alike have conduced rather to a spirit of service deriving from sense of duty, and the desire to help others to the happiness which has been his.

To his background also perhaps Mr. Chamberlain owes his freedom from bitterness, an attribute so often coupled with genius and one which blunts the edge and distorts the ends of statesmanship. Mr. Chamberlain's absolute freedom from bitterness and his desire to see the other person's point of view, are, in an embittered world, more than national assets, they are universal assets.

But do not let me be thought to suggest that Mr. Chamberlain's path has been smoothed or that he is untuned to struggle. If it be true that too adverse a struggle may lead to bitterness or eclipse, it is equally true that a degree of struggle is a necessary ingredient of statesmanship. The sheltered plant is not a hardy growth, capable of enduring the keen winds of an unsheltered world. Mr. Chamberlain was no sheltered plant. The struggle which he had was enough to harden but not to blight or wither. It is true that his father was a great statesman and his name a fine asset in British political life. But he was not destined for politics; it was his brother Austen for whom his father made smooth the path of politics. Neville Chamberlain spent the early formative years of his life in a primitive island endeavouring to win from Nature the reluctant tribute of her crops. In this contest with elemental forces neither influence nor rhetoric could avail: it was a question of resource, of pertinacity, of realism, and of indomitable will.

Some of Mr. Chamberlain's foremost characteristics were confirmed and strengthened in those early

years. His resilience, which at the age of seventy has made him so remarkable a figure on the international scene, was never more clearly in evidence than after the German occupation of Prague. To Herr Hitler, the occupation may have spelt fulfilment; to Mr. Chamberlain it was inevitably a blow to his hopes and a staggering disappointment. For a moment people who did not know his character thought that the blow was mortal; but Mr. Chamberlain, like a boxer in good training, shook his head and proceeded to adapt his tactics to the new position. Allied to his resilience is his characteristic habit of looking facts fairly and squarely in the face, which was again an essential condition of survival on Andros Island. He is free from the besetting temptation of democratic politicians, the temptation to lose the inescapable facts in a cloud of applauded phrases and familiar catchwords. He is in fact mistrustful of rhetoric and rhetoricians, and this mistrust leads him to an unconscious toning down in his own speeches. Almost alone among contemporary statesmen he tends to err on the side of understatement.

There is little or no poetry in Mr. Chamberlain. He lacks the ability, so much publicized in his predecessor Mr. Baldwin, to strike unerringly the chords of national sentiment and evoke the appropriate response. In the imaginative qualities of leadership Mr. Chamberlain is perhaps deficient, as he is in the literary aspects of statesmanship. His speeches will not survive for their literary form or their philosophic content: but in them can be read the plain unvarnished tale of these troubled times.

These deficiencies in Mr. Chamberlain's make-up are not without their compensation. If Mr. Chamberlain does not share the literary and philosophic qualities of his predecessors, he is equally free from their dangerous idolatry of words. "Under Mr.

Baldwin's guidance," said a Member of Parliament to me, "a debate in the House of Commons on the soil of England would rise to a debate on the soul of England." This would not happen with Mr. Chamberlain; but he would be much more insistent on practical results being achieved for the soil of England. Again the difference can be seen in Mr. Baldwin's attitude to dictatorships. "A dictatorship," he said, "is like a giant beech-tree; very impressive to look at, but nothing can grow underneath its branches." This striking simile, Mr. Baldwin felt, disposed of dictatorships; and with a feeling of work well done he relapsed into rumination. What he tended to forget was that the dictatorships remained, waxing in strength and confidence. Mr. Chamberlain never overlooks facts. To him the totalitarian challenge is clear, and it is equally clear that it must be met. The challenge is not only as to respective strength in war, though it has come to that; there is a totalitarian challenge to the efficacy of the democratic system, which can be met only by the evidence of fact, and not by cloudy perorations on freedom and democracy.

Mr. Chamberlain takes up such challenges not only in word but in deed. For him, in politics as in business it is the practical things that count; and he realizes that unceasing labour and industry are necessary to guide the State through these dark and dangerous times. He is not in danger of forgetting the truth of Mr. Kipling's lines:

"Oh England is a garden, and such gardens are not made,
By singing 'Oh, how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade."

One further challenge he can see of a more universal nature; the challenge made by the ordinary people of every land to world statesmanship, to find a solution of difficulties in harmony with their ideals

of international honour, justice and friendship. Like President Roosevelt, Mr. Chamberlain has shouldered also the burden of this greater challenge; and he is himself the symbol throughout the world of the desire of the plain man for harmony and just dealing with his neighbour.

He is himself a plain man. The world sees in him not a representative of the leisured literary tradition of British statesmanship, but a representative type different, but equally British, which it has long known in industry, a type absolutely fair in its dealings, but firm in upholding its rights; reserved yet confident; unexcitable and pacific, but, with a mind once made up, resolute to the end.

Such is the man whom the great majority of the British people have chosen as a leader in these critical times. In setting down this record of his life I have sought to extenuate nothing, and I have certainly set naught down in malice.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKBONE OF ENGLAND

THE Chamberlain stock has its roots deep in the everyday past of England. For many hundreds of years Chamberlains pursued the even tenor of their ways neither harassed by poverty nor affected by ambition. No hint of distinction, save that of good citizenship and middle-class virtue, makes itself felt until the advent of Joseph made the name Chamberlain famous in spheres which hitherto the family had regarded with detached and disinterested respect. Before him, there was nothing of distinction, and almost as little of ambition; there was, however, a long tradition of commercial solidity and God-fearing domesticity.

The Chamberlain stock is, as far as can be ascertained, entirely and exclusively English, and there is a clear family tree going back to Stuart times. The name Chamberlain is of course to be found, with variations of spelling, in many parts of England. It derives from the Middle Ages, where the term Chamberlain was in use to describe three sorts of functionary. There was the chamberlain who was steward of a great nobleman's estate; and bearers of the name to-day, who fancy a feudal extraction, can derive support from this suggestion of landed origin. There was, too, the chamberlain who collected revenues or rents for public bodies; and this would appear to be an eminently suitable origin for a successful Chancellor of the Exchequer. Thirdly there was the chamberlain who looked after the bed-

rooms in an Inn; and no doubt these composed the great majority.

In the case of the Chamberlain family with which we are concerned there is no evidence to show their medieval origin. On the distaff side, however, we have knowledge of ancestors at any rate in Tudor times. There was John Spicer, who was jerked out of his normal, peaceful life by the loyal strength of his religious convictions. His name finds a humble place in the role of Protestant Martyrs, for he was burnt at the stake near Salisbury in the third year of the reign of Mary Tudor. Then there was William Spicer, a parson at Stone, near Kidderminster, in the reign of Good Queen Bess. His life appears to have been lived out in tranquillity and usefulness as became the life of a clergyman of the Church of England in those secure and spacious times. His daughter Hannah somewhat unexpectedly married a Nonconformist Minister of Kidderminster, one Richard Serjeant. This gentle Puritan, a friend of Baxter the famous Divine, had, in spite of the poor quality of his preaching, considerable influence in a town noted at that time for its ignorance and depravity. This influence he owed to "his manifold worth, remarkable self-devotion, and singular sanctity." Even these qualities, however, did not avail him when the overthrow of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of the Merry Monarch involved an Act of Uniformity, by which he, like many others of his persuasion was turned out of his living. He was more fortunate than many for he was able to retire to the little estate of Hagley and there finish his days in peace. Nearly a hundred years later his great-great-granddaughter married a Chamberlain.

The Chamberlains themselves, like the Spicers, were country folk and so remained until the time of Queen Anne. Their branch of the family came from

Wiltshire, where they were natives of the little village of Lacock in the Avon valley. The first known Chamberlain ancestor was Daniel Chamberlain, who in those days followed the old and characteristic calling of maltster. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries small maltsters were plentifully besprinkled in England's green and pleasant land: and Daniel Chamberlain was not the only small maltster in those parts to be the ancestor of a statesman, for in another village not far away an ancestor of Gladstone was following the same occupation. There is still an old building in the village known as Daniel Chamberlain's Malthouse, and it is very possible that this was the scene of the first known Chamberlain's activities. It is not quite certain whether Daniel Chamberlain came up to London in his later years, or whether he died a countryman. It is quite probable that the last years of his life were spent in London, for there is a Daniel Chamberlain buried in the City Church of St. Lawrence Jewry. This church was certainly associated with his son and with the Chamberlain family for many generations.

Be this as it may, it was the son, William Chamberlain, who was the real founder of the Chamberlain family in London. He came to London at the age of twenty to become apprenticed to his uncle, who was a confectioner. After a very short time, however, a wider and more promising field for his activity presented itself, and in 1733 he was apprenticed again to one John Hose, a master shoe maker and member of the Cordwainers' Company. In making this choice William Chamberlain dictated the course which the family history was to follow. For one hundred and fifty years the Chamberlains practised the craft of shoemaking and continued their association with the Cordwainers' Company and the Church of St. Lawrence Jewry, which had originated in

the apprenticeship of William Chamberlain. After a long and thorough period of apprenticeship he set up in business for himself as a shoemaker in Milk Street, and in these premises the family business was successfully conducted through four generations. William Chamberlain not only founded the business in which his family were to follow, but established also the pattern in which their type was set. He was a vigorous and competent man of affairs, sound in the conduct of his business, and conscientious in the discharge of matters connected with the company and the vestry. Like most city tradesmen in those days, William Chamberlain lived over his warehouse and concentrated his interests upon his own locality. Again, like many tradesmen, the Chamberlains were Nonconformists, their particular form of religion being Unitarian. It might be thought that the Act of Uniformity would have prevented the Chamberlains as Nonconformists from occupying civic positions at this time. Like other dissenting tradesmen, however, they overcame this statutory obstacle by the practice of what was known as occasional conformity; that is to say, they took the Sacrament from time to time as a matter of form in order to attain the minimum requirement necessary to qualify for civil office. So it was that by the time of his death at seventy-five William Chamberlain, Unitarian shoemaker, had become Mr. Churchwarden Chamberlain of St. Lawrence Jewry and father of the Cordwainers' Company and of the new Cordwainers' Hall. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, the burying ground of Dissenters which harboured the mortal remains of John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe.

At the time of William Chamberlain's death in 1788 his son was thirty-six. This son, the first Joseph Chamberlain, resembled his father in his energy and business acumen. Like his father too, he rose through

all the distinctions of the Cordwainers' Company. The business was now firmly established on a profitable basis and had what was at that time the substantial capital of some £11,800. It was this Joseph Chamberlain who married the descendant of the Nonconformist Minister Richard Serjeant. As a matter of fact he married successively two descendants, for his wives were sisters. In this respect it was fortunate for Joseph Chamberlain that he was a Unitarian, for, although marriage with a deceased wife's sister was not at that time strictly illegal, it was forbidden by the Church of England. The sisters were the daughters of Joseph Strutt, whose brother Jedediah was famous in the early days of the Industrial Revolution as the partner of Arkwright, and the improver of the stocking frame. Jedediah's grandson became Lord Belper, and so the Chamberlains are related not only to the Belper family, but by marriage to England's premier, and Catholic, Duke. Joseph Chamberlain lived even longer than his father and the eighty-five years of his life spanned the Seven Years War, the War of American Independence, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the passage of the Reform Act, and the accession of Queen Victoria. He lived, too, just long enough to see the babyhood of his grandson who was to become the famous statesman. There survives a silhouette of him as a young man, which shows him as having that sartorial smartness which was to be characteristic of the Chamberlains, and as closely resembling in profile his famous grandson in the days of his maturity.

Joseph Chamberlain was succeeded in the conduct of his business by his son Joseph the second. He also had a daughter Martha who married J. S. Nettlefold, a marriage which was to exercise a profound and decisive effect upon the destinies of the Chamberlains. Joseph the second, like his father and grand-

father before him, passed through the Cordwainers' Company and the vestry of St. Lawrence Jewry. Like them too, he was assiduous in his conduct of the business, of which in 1842 he became sole partner. Personally he was resolute and capable as had been his father and grandfather before him, but he was of a more thoughtful habit and his character was tinged with austerity. It might have been that in this man would have been the apotheosis of the solid Nonconformist Chamberlain stock. For several generations they had been the very epitome of middle-class commercial domesticity. They were serious and industrious, relaxing into geniality at the Cordwainers' feasts, where it was proper for them so to do. They were assailed by the temptations neither of wealth nor of poverty, and were enabled by character and circumstance alike to be models of steady sobriety and business diligence. The Bank and St. Paul's comprised their landscape, and the thoroughfare between them, their promenade; at 36 Milk Street they conducted their business and led their uneventful lives, punctuated only by the slight variation in business profits and the frequent arrival, and not infrequent premature demise, of the children who composed their large families. They valued commercial success, but did wrong to no man; whatever lay to their hand they did with decent diligence, but did not mingle with affairs that were too high for them; they married and were given in marriage with those of their own class and their own morality; they worshipped God after their own fashion, and strove to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and unto God the things that were God's; they were good citizens, faithful husbands, and conscientious fathers. They were the middle-class incarnate, which is so often claimed—especially by those who themselves belong to it—as the backbone of England.

But the backbone, essential as it is to survival, does not provide direct motive power. For the Chamberlain stock to produce anything as wayward as genius an injection of temperament was required. This injection it received from Joseph's marriage to Caroline Harben.

Caroline Harben was one of eighteen children of Henry Harben, who was by turn a brewer in the Mile End and a wholesale cheesemonger in Whitechapel. The family however was of old Somerset stock, coming to Sussex in the seventeenth century. Then like the early Chamberlains they were maltsters, but their family history was more romantic and more chequered than that of the steadier Chamberlains. Thomas Harben, however, grandfather to Caroline's father, had been a clock-maker at Lewes who had made a small fortune by the unconventional method of buying the salvage rights of a wrecked Spanish ship. Amongst its cargo was quicksilver of a total value of over £20,000. His son, Thomas, who we are told, was "a rousing, jolly, good-looking Englishman," was fortunate enough to marry Elizabeth Playstead, who is described as a fine woman with a comfortable fortune. With all these attributes he felt that he was well equipped for politics, and enlisted in the Whig ranks. Acting as electoral adviser first to the Duke of Newcastle, who held office for so long, and subsequently to the Duke of Richmond, he was a man of influence and position. Unfortunately his financial prosperity did not keep pace with his political advancement, for unprofitable speculations in real estate considerably impaired his fortune. Caroline's father, Henry, was the second of the politician's thirteen children, and so, although Henry was more prudent than his father, we may assume that she brought no substantial fortune. She did bring, however, that of which the Chamberlains

perhaps stood more in need, a gaiety, a liveliness of disposition, and a sunniness of temperament, which were in marked contrast to the austerity of her husband.

These two, Joseph Chamberlain the second, and his wife Caroline were the parents of the great "Joe Chamberlain." Almost immediately after their marriage, and prompted no doubt by the influence of his wife, who was twelve years younger than himself, Joseph Chamberlain broke with the family tradition of living in Milk Street, which had been the home of the Chamberlains as well as the seat of their business for over a hundred years. They took advantage of the increased accessibility of the outskirts of London to take a house in Camberwell, then a pleasant and airy neighbourhood and within reasonable distance of Milk Street. Here at 3 Camberwell Grove, Joseph Chamberlain was born on the 8th of July 1836. At about this time it is computed that the family income was in the neighbourhood of £800 a year, which ensured a comfortable and secure existence. Indeed the age into which the young Joseph was born was to be the paradise of the middle classes, an age of political stability and expanding commercial activity. There was the young Queen to purify Court and Society, and there were the *Pickwick Papers* to amuse the hours of leisure. It is true *The Times* was full of unsatisfactory news from Ireland and the progress of the Spanish Civil War in which Queen Isabella was embroiled with the Carlists: but there was nothing to indicate at this time that the young Chamberlain would so far vary the type from which he had sprung as to be the spokesman of their desires and grievances.

Young Joseph grew up to be a slim and hardy child with his dark hair and grey-blue eyes. Intelligent without being precocious, he partook alike of

the gravity of his father and of the vivacious good-humour of his mother. For company there was a large Chamberlain clan of uncles, aunts, cousins, and surviving ancestors, in whom the family tradition of longevity was well maintained. Indeed when he was six, his great-great-grandmother, Mary Austin, was still alive, who had been a young woman when Doctor Johnson was in his prime, and had been nearly fifty at the outbreak of the French Revolution. At the age of eight, young Joseph went to a private school near by, which was kept by two maiden ladies, the Misses Pace. One of these actually survived her distinguished pupil and left it on record that he was "a clever child who did not take things easily but went deeply into them, and was very serious for a boy." Here he remained for two years, until his parents moved from Camberwell to High-bury, where they took a pleasant Regency house with a fine garden. From there he went to a Church of England school, presumably abstaining from the study of the catechism as at his private school, at 36 Canonbury Square. At the age of fourteen, he went to the University College School to complete his schooling. He at no time evinced that fondness for sport which by so many is considered to be essential to healthy English boyhood, and was indeed fonder of mental effort; but there was nothing priggish or precocious about him, and he had plenty of fun in his disposition, which he liked to indulge out of school. There then arose the question of the desirability of a university education for so promising a young man. Oxford and Cambridge in those days still shut their doors against Dissenters, and so there could be no question of that. There was, however, the possibility of University College, London, where his mother was desirous that he should be sent. His father however, true to the

inflexible principle of justice by which he was guided would not give to one son an advantage which he could not afford for the others. So young Joseph went straight from school to join his father's business in Milk Street.

For business he had a natural aptitude and he early gave evidence that attention to business was the law of his life. Unlike his father, however, he did not allow his business gravity to accompany him into his leisure hours, and when his duty was done he immersed himself gladly in pleasure. At this time he never missed a dance if he could help it, and he developed an enthusiasm for amateur theatricals, which was the outward expression of a dramatic instinct which lasted his lifetime. What effect this industrious and vivacious young man would have had upon the family business in Milk Street is an interesting conjecture. But it is no more than a conjecture for there occurred at this time the event which directed his course to the sphere which his achievements made memorable. As has already been mentioned, his aunt had married J. S. Nettlefold. Nettlefold had been an ironmonger in Holborn but had subsequently started a screw factory on Thames-side. Screw-making however was in those days done by hand, and so in about 1842 he transferred his business to Birmingham, where he considered that he could obtain a cheaper supply of labour and materials. His business prospered in Birmingham, but in 1851 he discerned a challenge, which if not taken up might prove fatal to his business interests. The challenge took the form of an American invention for screw-making which he saw at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. A lesser man might well have ignored or belittled the possibilities of the invention, and by adhering to his own methods have allowed the course of events to overtake him, and leave his

business stranded. Not so John Nettlefold. He gave the matter his most earnest consideration and, realizing that the practical success of the invention might spell his ruin, he decided to buy all British rights in it. This decisive action necessitated an increase in the capital of his business, and he urged his brother-in-law to invest in it. This Joseph Chamberlain agreed to do and, considering it desirable to have somebody on the spot to look after his interests, he sent young Joseph to join the firm. So it was that before he was twenty Joseph Chamberlain found himself a man of Birmingham.

THE CHAMBERLAIN FAMILY CIRCLE

LIKE another Joseph of old, the young Chamberlain flourished exceedingly in this strange land. Like that other Joseph also he started in a humble capacity, and relied on his own talents and grasp of opportunity. It was not long before they set him swarming up the ladder. He started at the bottom of the business and lived in modest lodgings in Edgbaston. Soon he was working himself up, the more so as he was now more companionable and friendly in manner than had been the case when he was at school. He began to work in close collaboration with his cousin, young Joseph Nettlefold, Nettlefold looking after the technical side of the business, and Chamberlain devoting himself to sales organization and the commercial aspect. He showed immediate evidence of his own business acumen, and was fortunate in working in very favourable circumstances, for the patent which Nettlefold Senior had acquired speedily gave the firm an advantage over their rivals, who were forced to rely on less up-to-date methods. Amongst the other activities of the firm which Joseph Chamberlain took under his own supervision was that of travelling. He was the firm's principal and best commercial traveller, and made visits to France, to Ireland, to Germany, and to Scandinavia for the purpose of making fresh contacts for the firm and expanding their export market.

In this way money came easily and rapidly, and

Joseph Chamberlain found time for other activities. He joined, for instance, a debating society, and when he became its secretary at the early age of twenty-two he was already well known for his effective, business-like methods of speaking and for the eye-glass which he had lately begun to wear. He had some leisure too for social existence, and naturally found friends amongst those who like himself came of Unitarian manufacturing stock. Notable among these were the two branches of the Kenrick family. The Kenricks were wealthy and respected citizens of Birmingham, and Joseph Chamberlain was soon a frequent visitor at both houses. He was especially fond of visiting Berrow Hall, the home of Archibald Kenrick, for there lived the daughter of the house, Harriet Kenrick. Harriet was the same age as Joseph Chamberlain, whereas Florence her cousin was at that time only a schoolgirl. In October of 1861 he proposed to Harriet, and they were married at the new Meeting House.

The marriage was extremely happy, but unfortunately short-lived. Their first child was a daughter Beatrice, but the second, born in October 1863, was a son, the future Sir Austen Chamberlain. Unhappily Harriet died in childbirth, and Joseph Chamberlain was left a young widower at the age of twenty-eight. He took it very hard indeed, declaring at the time "that it seemed almost impossible to live." It was not until his third marriage over twenty years later that he ever referred to her in conversation with his son Austen. Meanwhile he had to try and fill the gap left by her death, and he found in work the most enduring solace. But determinedly as he threw himself into the business of Nettlefolds, it was not enough. Consequently he turned in the evenings to welfare work and to Sunday school teaching, where his eye-glass and tall hat, which he seldom removed,

soon made him a familiar figure. It was also observed that he used to employ his umbrella as a pointer on the blackboard during his lectures. This social and educational work was the beginning of his interest in municipal affairs; and it is at least possible that, had he remained a prosperous business man, happy in the companionship of his wife and children, he would never have entered into public life. In which case Birmingham would owe much to his grief. As it was he began slowly to take an interest in the public work of the town, and in 1865 was present as one of the rank and file when the Birmingham Liberal Association was formed.

Meanwhile, in accordance with Harriet's wish, her two children were placed under the care of her unmarried sister at Berrow Hall, where their father came to live also. But not all his business and public work, nor even the knowledge that his children were well and tenderly cared for, could still the unease which haunted Chamberlain's heart. "That great and terrible loss constantly in my mind," he wrote, "left me always with a sense of insecurity and a dread of possibilities which were too full of pain to dwell on continually." But his salvation was at hand. Florence Kenrick was growing up, and he felt drawn to her both by her resemblance to her cousin and by the ways in which she differed from her. By the time she was out of her teens his mind was made up, and on the 8th of June 1868 she became his wife. Of this marriage Neville Chamberlain, born in the following year was the eldest child and only son.

Once again Joseph Chamberlain had found an ideal wife. In his own words "there was no thought or action she did not share with me." They lived at Southbourne, then a green and open suburb, where Neville Chamberlain was born. His interests and

social activities were now wider than they had been in the life-time of Harriet, and Florence took her full share in them all. It was a year after the marriage that Joseph Chamberlain received an invitation to stand for the Birmingham Council, which his wife urged him to accept. This entailed meetings, speeches, and articles. She attended his meetings, and helped with his speeches and articles, in the work of indexing, arrangement, and compilation of materials. Both in the entertainment of guests and in the discharge of the social side of civic duties, she was of great assistance to her husband. There was one taste which he had acquired from Harriet which she set herself to study. This was botany, for Harriet's love of flowers had awakened a love of gardening in Joseph Chamberlain, which became a characteristic trait of the Chamberlains, and was found strongly both in Austen and Neville. In his private life Joseph Chamberlain was happy again; and with that happiness he could find pleasure once more in his tastes and recreations—in his garden, his walks, his fishing, and his private theatricals. As for Florence, in addition to all her wifely duties, she was a mother. After Neville there came three daughters in the next few years. It is not altogether to be wondered at that her husband wrote: "she was never strong and had a delicate and spiritual look which sometimes made me anxious; but her spirit was indomitable and she did not know what idleness was." In the light of modern opinion on these matters one cannot altogether resist the reflection that it was unfortunate that a delicate woman should have had four confinements in six years. The fifth, in the seventh year, proved fatal. Florence Chamberlain died in child-birth in 1875, and the child died so soon after that mother and child were buried in the same coffin. Once again Joseph Chamberlain

was left a desolate young widower, this time with six children of whom the eldest was only fifteen.

Shortly after her death Joseph Chamberlain wrote the following tribute to his wife, putting it aside that it might be read later by her children.

Early in our married life my public work began to grow upon me and from the first and throughout Florence identified herself with and took the most lively interest in all its phases. . . . During the few years which have followed I have had in my wife a friend and counsellor intensely interested in the objects for which I have striven, heartily rejoicing in my success and full of loving sympathy in an occasional failure and disappointment. And looking back I see how the path has been smoothed for me by her unselfish affection and how much strength I have gained from the just confidence I have reposed in the judgement and devotion with which she has played the part reserved for her. It is easy to give time and thought and labour to public work while the mind is relieved from any anxiety about home duties and all the responsibilities of life are shared by a real helpmate and companion . . . and the result of this complete similarity and identity of interests has naturally been to knit us both together so that I can now say that there has been no thought or action of my later years which my wife has not shared with me, and no place or ambition or desire formed for the future which has not been shadowed by her death.

Her stepson Sir Austen Chamberlain has also left a delightful and intimate sketch of her in his book *Politics from the Inside*. In this he wrote: "I still see her, as on our arrival with my father at his new home, she came running from the rockery where she was planting ferns they had gathered on their honeymoon in the Lakes, pulling off her gauntlet gloves, with the trowel still in her hand and a loving welcome for her new children which never failed in her short life. She bore my father four children. Between them and us she made no distinction, and amidst

the cares of this growing family and of my father's public life—for he soon became Mayor of Birmingham—she always found time to play with us, to read to us and to watch over us with all a mother's love."

To the children who were deprived of such affectionate care as to the husband who lost such love and companionship the blow was hard to bear. The death of his mother in child-birth made a lasting impression upon the mind of Neville Chamberlain, and more than once in his early years as a Minister he startled an assembly which believed him to be cold and unemotional by his reference to his personal interest in the problem of maternal mortality. Her death might well have meant that there would be little of the warmth of family life, little of the intimacy of the home circle for the Chamberlain children. In fact the young Neville and his brothers and sisters continued to be surrounded with loving care and attention. Joseph Chamberlain's second cousin came to the house to undertake the task of mothering the young and growing family. In a little while she left to get married, and her place was taken by his younger sister. In her too they found an ideal foster-mother until she herself got married, also to a Kenrick. By this time however Neville Chamberlain's step-sister Beatrice was old enough to assume the management of her father's house. In this, as in all else she touched, she was brilliantly successful, for she was one of those rare creatures who combine, in the words of *The Times* after her death in 1918, "the mind of a great man with the heart of a great woman." That she had a great mind can be seen from the fact that Sir Austen considered that of all his father's children she most resembled him in intellect: not the least evidence of her greatness of heart is the way she brought up her father's children.

"Throughout all these changes," said Sir Austen, "the spirit of the home never changed and the ties of love held us ever more united."

Neville Chamberlain, therefore, was as fortunate in his home life as a motherless boy can be. It was lucky that the series of foster-mothers turned out so well, for the exigencies of public life prevented Joseph Chamberlain from spending much time with his children. He had become Mayor of Birmingham in the life-time of the second Mrs. Chamberlain, and in 1874 he had retired from business life with a fortune which Mr. Garvin computes at or about £120,000, in order to devote himself to public affairs. This is not the place to indicate the political struggles and achievements of Joseph Chamberlain: for are not these things written in the book of Garvin? Suffice it here to say that the childhood and boyhood of Neville Chamberlain was lived against the background of his father's great work for Birmingham and his triumphant and spectacular descent upon the arena of national politics. Neville Chamberlain was only seven when his father entered the House of Commons by way of a by-election in Birmingham, two years after his defeat at Sheffield in the General Election of 1874. Four years later Joseph Chamberlain entered upon his departmental duties as President of the Board of Trade in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet. This is not to say that the rising statesman neglected his children. On the contrary, though his political preoccupations necessarily limited the time which he was able to spend with them, he took a keen enjoyment in their company at all possible times. Joseph Chamberlain was not only a great administrator and a celebrated political speaker; he was also, what politicians are not always, a good conversationalist, and—even more rare a quality in a politician—a good listener.

He enjoyed talking to his children, and laid down fewer moral injunctions than was the fashion of the time. Sir Austen recalls only three such precepts: "Always tell the truth; everything can be forgiven if you tell the truth.—If a thing is worth doing at all, do it well.—When you are told to do something by Mama, do it at once. When you have done it you may ask why." These three simple precepts, enjoining candour, thoroughness, and discipline, are characteristic of the man.

Normally, however, he would just talk to his family and listen to what they had to say. He liked to talk to them about what he was doing and what was occupying his attention at the time; and in turn he encouraged them to talk to him of what interested them. What interested the young Neville Chamberlain? He was interested, when he was old enough, as any son would have been, in his father's public activities. But he did not when a boy take an interest from the point of view that such things were to be part of his life. Politics were to be the occupation of his brother Austen, who went to Rugby in the year that his father was elected to Parliament, and was an undergraduate at Cambridge during most of the period at which his father was at the Board of Trade; for him from boyhood his father designed a political career in somewhat the same way as Chatham fashioned the younger Pitt in the mould of statesmanship. The young Neville shared in the simpler tastes of his father and brother, in their love of walking and in their love of flowers and country life. These simple tastes have remained his pleasures through a life-time. He was lithe, lean, and strong; intelligent without being in the least precocious, thoughtful rather than talkative. Though no doubt Austen was his father's favourite son, Neville Chamberlain was on extremely good terms

with both father and brother as well as with the girls of the family. In Neville Chamberlain's own words "the family life centred round my father, for whom all of us, and Austen Chamberlain in particular, had the profoundest and most devoted admiration and affection . . . we were an extraordinarily united family."

Austen Chamberlain had been the first Chamberlain to go to a public school, and Neville followed him to Rugby in 1882 at the age of thirteen. Rugby was not only geographically the most convenient school for people in Birmingham; it also enjoyed, as a result of the reforming zeal of Doctor Arnold and the publication of *Tom Brown's School Days* by the Christian Socialist Tom Hughes, the reputation of being the pioneer of progress among the public schools. It was, therefore, in every way a suitable school for the reception of the sons of the Radical Dictator. Austen Chamberlain had enjoyed his period at Rugby, and Neville also had a happy and successful school career. He differed from both his father and his brother, and was more characteristically English in this respect than they, in that he played games, to which the Englishmen of his generation were rather less addicted than subsequent generations became; Austen Chamberlain had little taste for them and would have had but little aptitude for most games on account of his defective eyesight. Neville Chamberlain, on the other hand, not only played games, but at school proved himself to be better at them than at anything else. He won his cap at football, was a competent fives player, and a keen swimmer. He played games in the term time at school and in the holidays went for long rambles studying flowers and bird life.

Neville Chamberlain was in fact one of that large army of school boys, which endures through the

generations, quietly efficient at the various things that their hands are set to do. He could not have been called brilliant and he had no desire, then or later, to make his talents appear better or other than they were by tricks of showmanship. This is not to say that he was not intellectually capable. On the contrary, he was in the sixth form at Rugby by the time he was seventeen, and became Head of his House, the latter position being a tribute to his all-round qualities. Though he was on the Classical Side at Rugby, he is one of the very few British Prime Ministers, with the exception of Mr. Lloyd George, whose tastes have not included an interest in classical literature. In the 1880's however, quite apart from any question of personal tastes a classical education was considered the most fitting, if not the only, training for sons of gentlemen. Consequently Neville Chamberlain's standing at Rugby was high as a member of the Classical Sixth and Head of his House. His father, however, had no knowledge of the nice distinctions obtaining at English Public Schools, and, at any rate in the 1880's, would no doubt have been impatient of them and sceptical of their importance, if he had so known. His view was a practical one. His second son was destined for a business life, and consequently common sense suggested that it would be more useful to him to be on the Modern side, where the subjects taught had a greater bearing on business. He arranged therefore for his son's transference from the Classical to the Modern side, oblivious of the fact that he was thereby removing him from the ranks of the privileged and great. The transference inevitably caused some sorrow to Neville Chamberlain on this score, though he had few regrets at being severed from the Classics for their own sake. He might no doubt have pointed out to his father these larger social

implications; but it did not occur to a Chamberlain to question the wisdom of the great Joseph, and he obediently acquiesced in the decision. In point of fact, however, the change did not greatly matter, since before he was eighteen Neville Chamberlain left Rugby. At the time of his leaving a political tipster might perhaps have cast Austen Chamberlain as a future Radical Prime Minister; it would have hardly occurred to anybody that this quiet boy, removed from the Classical to the Modern Side in the interests of a business career, was to be the first Rugbeian Prime Minister of this country.

The year 1886, when Neville Chamberlain left Rugby, was a watershed in the history of the Chamberlains, for in March of that year Joseph Chamberlain finally split with Mr. Gladstone on the Irish Question; from that year dated the beginning of the emergence from the Birmingham Radical of the great Imperialist. The resignation of Joseph Chamberlain appeared to many at the time to be a voluntary and unnecessary renunciation of the probable succession to Mr. Gladstone in the Liberal Leadership. But matters of advantage counted nothing with Joseph Chamberlain when weighed in the scales against principle. His action meant that he was out of office for nearly ten years but it also involved the fall of Mr. Gladstone and the dependence of Lord Salisbury's Government of 1886 to 1892 upon the Liberal Unionist vote, which included Chamberlain's following in the Birmingham seats. But Joseph Chamberlain's absorption in politics was not shared by his younger son, whose business career had already been planned. Austen Chamberlain had gone to Trinity College, Cambridge, from Rugby, thereby acquiring cultural and social opportunities, the lack of which, in his own case, Joseph Chamberlain sometimes regretted. By 1886 Austen

Chamberlain had finished at the University and was undergoing the next process in his political training in the form of a period of residence in France, which was followed early in 1887 by a year in Germany. Neville Chamberlain had no such periods of residence abroad, and it is a moot point, to which reference will be made again later, as to whether such early contacts are an advantage in the subsequent conduct of Foreign Affairs. This much, however, can be said here; that in the case of Austen Chamberlain his father planned the foreign contacts in the wrong order. Austen Chamberlain's sojourn in France as a young man left him bewitched by French civilization and the French way of life, a spell that endured through a lifetime much of which was spent in International politics. His visit to Germany he tolerated rather than enjoyed, and it is significant that he never revisited that country. For a young man to get the best out of contacts with Germany and France, he should go first to Germany and then to France; to do otherwise is to reverse the logical order, and is like sending a boy to the University before he goes to his Public School.

Joseph Chamberlain's father had not been prepared to give to one son the advantage of University education which he was unable to provide for the other. With Joseph Chamberlain both the economic position and the point of view were different. He could have afforded without difficulty to send both his sons to a university; but he considered that a university education was not necessarily an advantage as a prelude to business. Consequently there was to be no Cambridge, no France or Germany for Neville Chamberlain: for him there was Mason College at Birmingham, which aimed to teach practical subjects and not to provide an education in a more dispersed and general culture. At Mason



FAMILY ALBUM

Standing, left to right: Neville Chamberlain, Austen Chamberlain Joseph Chamberlain
Seated: Miss Chamberlain and Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain

College he studied engineering, physics, and chemistry, all of which were useful equipments in the field of industry. For two years he attended the College, living at home during that period and going to and fro each day. Amongst his fellow-students was the son of a Midland ironmaster, who was also destined for a business career. He was the son of Alfred Baldwin, later Member of Parliament for Bewdley, and like Neville Chamberlain his subsequent career was not confined to the sphere of business. A day college in a great city does not provide the same opportunities of social intercourse as does a university, and it does not appear that the two students ever met, for Stanley Baldwin soon left to go to Trinity, Cambridge.

Neville Chamberlain did not resent the fact that his life appeared to be cast in pastures less pleasant and more restricted than those upon which his brother was sent to browse. Life in the Chamberlain circle was particularly pleasant at this time for Austen returned from his foreign travels, and Joseph Chamberlain, despite the stormy political weather in which he was caught up, was happier in his private life than he had been for a long time. He went out as head of the British Delegation to a conference which had been convened at Washington to deal with difficulties which had arisen between the United States, Canada, and Great Britain in the matter of fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland. This was Joseph Chamberlain's first visit to the United States, and he stayed for some months engaged in negotiations with the representatives of the Democratic Cabinet of the United States, presided over at that time by President Cleveland. The Mission was at last successful, and brought unforeseen results both in the political development of Joseph Chamberlain and in his personal life that were of great impor-

tance. This contact with the great communities beyond the seas broadened the outlook of one who until that time had been associated principally with Radical Little Englanders, and planted in him the fertile seeds of Imperialism. He met too Mary Endicott, daughter of President Cleveland; though she was about thirty years his junior, they fell in love, and in 1888 were married. The result was not only a gayer and more cheerful Joseph Chamberlain, but the introduction of a new and charming element into the Chamberlain family circle, who quickly won all hearts. Sir Austen Chamberlain wrote of her: "She was younger than my eldest sister and myself and she came from a different world; but she stepped so naturally into ours that soon she became the centre of our family life almost as much as my father himself." The charm and distinction of the then Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain have survived for the present generation in the person of Mrs. Carnegie, wife of Canon Carnegie, Chaplain to the Speaker.

All these things contributed to make life pleasant at home for the quiet student at Mason College. He continued with his country walks; and the love of flowers and of gardening was, as we have seen, a common interest of the Chamberlains. He was not perhaps by nature as intensive or as general a reader as his brother, but at this time he read a good deal, especially Shakespeare. He had too a considerable taste for music, and being himself a fair performer on the piano, it was not unknown for him to play Mendelssohn and Beethoven to the family circle. He benefited, too, by the love of travel which his first visit to the United States had aroused in Joseph Chamberlain, and at the age of twenty made his first long trip abroad, accompanying his father and stepmother on a trip to Egypt which they made

in the first year after their marriage. By this time, however, he had finished with Mason College and was ripe to take his place in the business community. He was apprenticed in 1889 to Howard Smith, a leading Birmingham accountant. So well did he get on that after six months his principal, not it may be imagined considering it to be any disadvantage to have the son of Joseph Chamberlain in his firm, offered him a permanent salaried post in his office. It might have been that Neville Chamberlain would have settled down to a quiet and diligent attention to the duties of accountancy. But it seemed otherwise to the gods and to Joseph Chamberlain. For at that time Joseph Chamberlain's quick imagination was fired by a project in the performance of which he cast his younger son for a leading role.

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

WHEN Joseph Chamberlain retired from business in the 1880's in order to devote himself to politics, he sold out his shares in Chamberlain and Nettlefold and had in consequence a considerable fortune to invest. A substantial part of it he put in South American securities. This may seem a curious investment for a great Imperialist, but at that time Joseph Chamberlain's Imperialism was a thing of the future; and it may be that the ultimate fate of the securities in question helped to direct his mind to the prospects of a more stable outlet for British capital in the Empire. Be that as it may, the South American securities underwent a slump in the latter half of the 1880's by reason of which Joseph Chamberlain suffered severe financial loss. So it was that in his American visit his mind was attuned to the possibility of lighting upon any venture from which might result a compensating profit. In this frame of mind he encountered in Montreal Sir Ambrose Shea, Governor of the Bahamas, who was at that time full of enthusiasm for the cultivation of sisal in the Bahamas.

Sisal is a plant which grows luxuriantly like a weed, but is in certain conditions capable of providing a substitute for hemp. It was not indigenous to the Bahamas, for it was apparently introduced there from Yucatan in 1845 by a Mr. Nesbitt who was at that time Colonial Secretary. At about the same time

the plant, of which the potentialities in respect of rope-making had just been discovered, was exported to various countries with climates and conditions similar to those of Yucatan. Several Governors in the Bahamas made some effort to create an industry of the production of rope from sisal, but without success; and by the time of Sir Ambrose Shea the whole project in a commercial sense appears to have lapsed. The sisal plant, however, continued to grow like a weed in the Islands, and Shea, noticing one day what appeared to be a piece of home-made rope in a native hut was told on inquiry that it "grew in the yard." He was shown the rough processes of manufacture, and, realizing the abundant growth of the plant in the Islands, was fired with the idea of promoting a new industry. It was while he was in this frame of mind that he met and talked with Joseph Chamberlain in the Bahamas.

Shea's enthusiasm was infectious and it was not long before the growing demand for Crown lands in the Bahamas advanced their price from five shillings to sixteen shillings an acre. At the same time a limit of one hundred thousand acres was imposed on the sale of land for the purpose of sisal cultivation in the next ten years.

The result of Shea's conversation with Joseph Chamberlain is summarized in a letter which Chamberlain wrote to his close friend Jesse Collings, M.P. "From his account," he said, "it looks as if enormous fortunes might be made out of this discovery and the prospect is so tempting that after thinking it over I wrote to Shea asking him for an option on twenty thousand acres of land. . . . I shall not touch the matter unless there is really a large fortune in it. . . ." It still remained however to prospect the Islands and to see which part offered the best possibilities for the success of the Chamberlain Plantation. To do this

it was necessary for him to send out a small mission, on whose loyalty, integrity, and courage he could entirely rely. Fortunately he had available at that time exactly the appropriate material in the persons of his two sons, the elder just back from his continental sojournings, and the younger with his period of apprenticeship as an accountant immediately behind him. It is true that they had no expert knowledge of sisal growing; but then neither had anybody else. Consequently Austen and Neville Chamberlain were deputed by their father to make the trip with a view to selecting the most appropriate spot for future activities. The two young men made the trip to America in the ordinary way, and then were faced with the necessity of deciding which of the Islands was best suited to the purpose. In order to select a suitable spot they chartered a twelve-ton cutter with which to make a trip round the outer Islands of the Bahamas. The trip was not altogether auspicious. In the first place space was extremely restricted so that there was room in the cabin only for one person to lie on the floor and for another on a seat four feet high. This might well have made the trip uncomfortable in any conditions; but to add to their difficulties the small craft was struck by a tremendous gale. Both the young Chamberlains were terribly sea-sick; but this was not the worst. One of the crew was actually washed overboard by the violence of the storm, and had to be rescued—no easy undertaking from a small boat in so turbulent a sea. The work of prospecting was carried out in these adverse conditions, and the two brothers decided that a plantation on Andros Island, the largest of the Bahamas group, was best suited for their purpose. The object of their journey being thereby accomplished, they returned to England to report to their father. He in turn gave further consideration to the matter and

finally decided to take up his option on the twenty thousand acres.

Once again the question arose: who was to be sent out to take charge of this venture from which it was hoped to win a fortune? His son Austen, now in the late twenties, had always been destined for a political career, and was by this time already nursing a constituency. There could therefore be no question of sending him. His son Neville, on the other hand, was not yet twenty-one, and it might have been thought that he was too young to be entrusted with so responsible a task. But Joseph Chamberlain remembered that at an even younger age he had been sent by his father to look after his interests in the new Birmingham venture. With this in mind he came to a decision which Mr. Garvin has aptly described as "characteristic in its mixture of Nonconformist vigour and Elizabethan spirit:" he decided that his son Neville should go out to take command. And so it was that Neville Chamberlain turned his back upon accountancy, and set sail for the New World once more, not this time upon a short trip but upon an adventure which must be long and arduous and might be hazardous as well.

To those financing the scheme from a distance the prospect might look rosy. Sisal was at that time selling at a figure between £20 and £40 a ton, and the cost of production was estimated at only £10 a ton. So there appeared to be justification for the belief that there might be a large fortune in the proposition. Viewed from close contact the situation which greeted Neville Chamberlain was less reassuring. In the first place the whole matter was experimental, and nobody at that time knew very much about sisal growing. Indeed one of the chief reasons for the choice of Andros Island was a negative one. The main island of Nassau was unsuitable because, as a result of years

of intensive effort to exterminate the plant, which had been regarded as a weed, time had to elapse before results could have been obtained from young plants. Andros Island, while not suffering from this particular disqualification, had other drawbacks of a serious nature. It was undeveloped, and large parts were unexplored. Generally speaking the land was of three sorts; there was what was known locally as pine-yard, coppet (coppice), and swash (low swamp). A large proportion of the Chamberlain plantation consisted of pine-yard, and therefore presented a formidable task in the matter of clearance. Further, in such tracts of wild uncleared land the quality itself varied considerably, and no amount of mere prospecting could guarantee accurate information on this point. The Island itself is a hundred miles long and forty miles broad. At the time of Neville Chamberlain's arrival it was very sparsely inhabited, and almost entirely by negroes. These were friendly enough creatures, who derived the means of existence chiefly from sponge fishing; they were however very poor and primitive in their way of life. The white population numbered only three—the majesty of the law in the person of the resident judge, and the consolation and exhortations of religion in the person of two parish priests. The arrival of Neville Chamberlain almost doubled the white population, for he did not come unaccompanied. He brought with him Mr. James R. Knowles, whom his father had selected as manager of the Chamberlain Plantation. Knowles was connected by marriage with the Johnson family, then as now leading residents in Nassau, his sister being Mrs. W. B. Johnson, whose husband was a member of the Assembly. Knowles therefore was a man of some position in the Bahamas, and had the advantage of local knowledge. The latter, however, he, like anybody else, could only have in a qualified

degree so far as the job in hand was concerned, for the development of Andros Island and the cultivation of the sisal plant for the purpose of the manufacture of hemp were alike in their infancy. Neville Chamberlain in short was engaged in pioneer work.

The pioneer had to start from scratch. It was not a question of arriving at a well-appointed residence with trained native servants to execute his orders and minister to his needs. So far from this being the position, there was no house for him to go to at all. The result was that Neville Chamberlain and his manager had perforce to live in a native hut, while the house was under construction. This hut consisted of three rooms covered over with a thatched roof, in which dwelt also a large colony of centipedes and scorpions; there were no windows. Such a dwelling might have been disagreeable to a young Englishman fresh from the comforts of a wealthy home, even if he and Knowles had had the exclusive use of the three rooms to themselves. In fact however they had to share their palace with the fifteen native carpenters, who were at work upon the construction of the house. An old negress supplied such service as there was, cooking a somewhat monotonous diet of rice and porridge, fish and eggs. In such conditions Neville Chamberlain made the acquaintance of the problem which confronted him.

There was this much to be said for the primitive home-life which alone was available at the time; it offered few temptations to linger in the house to the detriment of work upon the plantation. With such abundant and obvious evidence of the difficulties of the task all about him, there was in any case no temptation to a man of Chamberlain's determined temperament and thorough disposition to do otherwise than concentrate his whole energies upon the

task that lay before him. It was his habit to get up at five o'clock in the morning and, after a cup of tea, to walk about three-quarters of a mile to the plantation where the work of clearing was in progress. He directed the native labour and sometimes, by way of adding example to precept, he took an axe and himself did a turn at the work of clearing, which aroused great enthusiasm amongst the natives. At nine o'clock he returned home to breakfast, after which he again set out to the plantation. At one o'clock his midday meal was brought out to him at work, and he continued at the plantation until four. Then in the best English tradition he returned home to tea. After that there was no use in continuing work, and no enjoyment to be had in the open air, because of the unceasing attentions of the mosquitoes, which Chamberlain was engaged upon combating until he retired to an early bed at eight o'clock.

This was the ordinary routine of a typical day in the early work upon the plantation. Life, however, became more comfortable when his house was completed and he was able to move from his native hut. Not only had he more space and pleasanter surroundings; he was also able to derive more enjoyment from the hours of leisure in the evening since the house contained a wide veranda fitted with mosquito curtains. There was, of course, no social life in the accepted sense of the term, and he had to rely on his own resources for his entertainment. The chief of these was necessarily reading, and the nightly devotion of two or three hours to books laid the foundation of a wider reading than that with which in later years he has been generally credited. He was at that time especially interested in the theory of evolution and made a study of Darwin and Wallace besides reading a great deal of a general nature on history, geography and botany. Then too he had holidays—long holidays

at short intervals as is customary with Europeans living in difficult climates. About three months in each year he spent at home, and there was able to lead a more sociable existence and cultivate interests which were not possible in the Bahamas. As a musician he had added to his repertoire the singing of negro songs, with which he would amuse his family; for those were the days of amateur entertainment in the drawing-room. Photography he learned under the unexpected tutelage of the gardener's son. He did this partly with a view to taking a camera back with him to the Island; but with that minute and conscientious thoroughness, which is characteristic of the man in great things as in small, he insisted upon learning every detail with regard both to the camera itself and to the practice of photography before so doing. Another taste which he acquired on leave at this time, and which has survived throughout his life as one of his greatest pleasures, was that of shooting. As his holidays were long, however, he did not devote them entirely to the pursuit of pleasure; he also studied methods of making hemp, and read all that he could about the history and physical characteristics of the Bahamas, in order to further the success of the plantation. After one of these holidays in 1893 Neville Chamberlain's father and brother accompanied him back to Andros Island to see for themselves how the enterprise was progressing. The three Chamberlains sailed in the *Niagara*, one of the dirty and uncomfortable ships which at that time catered for the passenger traffic between England and the West Indies. The ship struck a hurricane in the Gulf Stream, and suffered a certain amount of damage. It came off better than others, however, for she had to rescue a crew from a water-logged brig. When they reached the Bahamas the Chamberlains found that the hurricane had not spared the Island,

for houses and even roads had been swept away by its violence. In spite of the inauspicious circumstances of the arrival the citizens of Nassau turned out to give the great Imperialist a fitting welcome. Austen Chamberlain who, jointly with Neville, had been welcomed on their prospecting trip three years earlier with a ball given in their honour, was now known on the Island simply as the "boss's brother." Notwithstanding the warmth of the welcome of Nassau the Chamberlains were naturally anxious to press on to Andros so that they could satisfy themselves as to the condition of the estate. They were fortunate: the hurricane which had done so much damage at sea and in Nassau had left little mark on the plantation. Joseph Chamberlain and Austen stayed for a short while and returned well satisfied with the prospects of the venture.

And, to all outward seeming, well they might be. Six thousand acres on the island had been cleared and planted. Neville Chamberlain had made a journey to Cuba in order to study light railways, as a result of which he had been able to supervise the laying down of a railway track on the Island. The organization too had greatly expanded, and by 1894 he was employing four white men and no fewer than eight hundred negroes on the plantation. The aggregation of labour, of course, entailed problems of commissariat. In the early days Neville Chamberlain had to supervise the building of a store to supply the wants of the men on his pay roll. This store was opened after the day's work was finished, and Chamberlain himself used to take up his position behind the counter and serve his customer employees. As the amount of labour employed increased and with it proportionately the volume of business done in the store, it became necessary to find a manager for it, and after two years of Mr. Chamberlain's

personal supervision the store was put in charge of a Mr. A. W. T. Cash. But the problem of commissariat was not the only one which it was necessary for an enlightened employer to solve on behalf of his labour. It was also desirable to find some means whereby men, many of whom were living away from their homes on other islands, could save a proportion of their wages. Chamberlain took this matter in hand, and decided to start a small safety bank for them. The bank was run on the lines of an ordinary joint stock bank, and each man had his pass book, and drew interest on his deposit. Chamberlain added to the burden of his voluntary work by keeping the accounts in association with Mr. Cash. Who knows but that the Birmingham Municipal Bank may have owed some part of its origin to this small but useful undertaking?

As time went by Neville Chamberlain became quite a figure in Nassau, where he was conspicuous on official occasions by his invariable costume of frock-coat and top-hat, which was an English importation not very common in those sub-tropical islands. We are not told, however, that he completed his uniform at this time with an umbrella. He became an object of affection and respect among both white men and natives, which was the result of the evidence which time afforded of his personal worth. Then as later he was somewhat reserved in manner and totally without the love of ostentation; his personality was not such as to make a speedy superficial impression, but time was on his side. With the natives in particular he was excellent, and the erection of the stores and the creation of the bank were only two of the various devices which he instituted in their interests. His work too was varied; for there was clearing, planting, importing, bargaining, banking, accountancy, and general administra-

tion. At various stages of the work there were specialized jobs to be done. Thus in early days he had had to supervise the blasting of a road through the coral rock, and it was thus that he gained his first practical experience of explosives, with which he was later to be concerned in business. The life was arduous, as can be seen from the description of a typical day's routine. Sometimes climatic and other conditions made the execution of work an exacting test of courage and endurance. For instance it was not unknown for him to be out all day in a temperature of 140 degrees. On one such occasion, stumbling and falling over jagged pieces of coral rock he contracted prickly heat; on another his leg went septic from contact with a poisoned tree. The flesh was heir to many ills on Andros Island; and sometimes Chamberlain had to bear the burden of the duties of others in addition to his own. A letter written by him at the time when the work on the plantation was at its height gives a plain unvarnished account of an arduous week on the Island. "Last week was one of the most severe I have ever had. On Friday, as if I had not enough to do otherwise, three schooners arrived with provisions and plants. Yesterday, as I had expected a heavy day's work, I told Arden to come and help me in the office, but early in the morning a vessel arrived with sisal leaves. From morn to dewy eve I toiled away, not even stopping for lunch. By common consent we never had so many people here before. Another schooner arrived full of plants and a vessel from the south end of the Island full of people who brought Island produce to sell, and wished to buy American provisions. About nine o'clock in the morning Cash came to me for whisky saying he felt faint. I had to take him up to the house and leave him there all the rest of the day unable to do anything. Knowles and his whole

family went off in the middle of the day to recruit, and a little later Johnson, the Circuit Magistrate, came to pay me a visit. Of course being everywhere short-handed the shop became absolutely packed. I had to go in myself and lend a hand. We only served the bare necessities of life, and then shoved the people out by main force. Late in the afternoon another vessel came full of leaf and this morning yet another full of plants. The wharf was already piled high from end to end and the carts must be used for taking out leaf which cannot wait. Is not this all enough to turn one's hair grey? That mine has not is attested by the fact that my cash balanced exactly last night in spite of innumerable entries and cross entries, additions and subtractions, heat, mosquitoes, and crowds of people."

But though all appeared to be well, and progress to be satisfactory as far as could be measured, there was a very real speculative element in the venture. Little was known about the growing of sisal, and it took five years for a crop to mature. Consequently in 1895 the young Chamberlain looked with keen and anxious interest to see how the sisal would reach maturity. To his dismay the plants showed signs of turning yellow, and began to wither. He did everything that ingenuity could suggest to reclaim them. It was all to no avail, because the defect was fundamental. The depth of soil over the greater part of the plantation was not sufficient to maintain a sisal plant to maturity. The next six months was a period of dwindling hope and gave confirmation of the fact that the scheme was a failure. It became apparent that there was to be no return on the considerable outlay which had been invested in the proposition. The large fortune which Joseph Chamberlain had seen in the project was no longer a matter of consideration. Instead he had to compute his losses,

which Mr. Garvin assesses at about £50,000. The measure of his disappointment can be gauged from a letter which he wrote to his wife: "It seems as though everything was against us and that this last string to my bow will fail like the rest. I shall write to him (Neville) not to increase the clearing but to do the best with the six thousand acres already planted. Perhaps matters will turn out better than he expects; anyway we have done our best and must bear our fate. It is hard upon him even more than upon us and it seems as though luck had left us entirely."

Joseph Chamberlain's reflection that it was harder upon his son than upon himself was instinct with the generosity characteristic of a great man. But the comment was in fact no more than the truth. To Joseph Chamberlain it was a heavy financial loss at a time when his customary good fortune seemed to have deserted him: to Neville Chamberlain it was the collapse of the hopes and the defeat of the striving which had principally occupied the whole of his adult life. But, though there was defeat, there was yet release. Joseph Chamberlain was not easily convinced that his calculations were in error or his projects in ruins. Nor at this time could he afford lightly to abandon even the last vestiges of hope, for he sustained another severe financial loss by selling out his shares in the Canadian Pacific Railway, when they were at slump prices. Consequently Neville Chamberlain had to remain at his post for two more years in order to see if by some miracle the project could be salvaged.

The work of that last two years was necessarily carried out with a less buoyant heart than had sustained him in the five years of hope. But in fighting his rearguard action he relaxed nothing of that patient endurance and that abiding resolution which had

sustained him through the early days. He had, however, one personal factor to cheer him in those last two years, which he had not heretofore. His young cousin Norman Chamberlain came out to the Plantation, and was Neville Chamberlain's close and constant companion. This made the struggle, and even the prospect of defeat, more tolerable; and above all it cheered the hours of leisure. Neville Chamberlain communicated to his young cousin his own love of Nature, and found in him an apt and willing pupil; so much so that Naturalists remember Norman Chamberlain by the butterfly named after him *Terias Chamberlainii*. Norman Chamberlain was, like Austen, intended for a political career; but the gentle creature preferred, on leaving Oxford, to turn aside from business and politics in order to assist the Rector of Birmingham, the Reverend W. H. Carnegie, in welfare work. Between Neville Chamberlain and Norman Chamberlain there grew up a close friendship, which continued after the return from the Bahamas and was dissolved only by Norman's death. In 1914 Norman Chamberlain, although ill at the time, succeeded in obtaining a commission and went out to serve in France. In a letter written to Neville Chamberlain from France he wrote: "I know now what fear—naked and absolute—means; and it isn't pleasant." He was killed in 1917, and the violent end of this sensitive soul who seemed to have been fashioned, if any man was, exclusively for the service of the things of peace, exercised a powerful effect upon the imagination of Neville Chamberlain. It made him wholeheartedly and to the depth of his being a man of peace.

Though the companionship of his cousin could lighten those two years, neither that nor any other circumstance could redeem the failure of the plantation. At the end of that time Joseph Chamberlain

was willing to acknowledge defeat. For him it mattered less, for things had gone well with him, and by the time of his son's return he had entered upon his masterful and inspired tenure of the Colonial Office. Austen Chamberlain too had been treated kindly by the fates, and was by this time Civil Lord of the Admiralty in Lord Salisbury's Government. But for Neville Chamberlain two years' work had only gone to confirm failure. He was returning from the ruins of the scheme which he had tended so long and so faithfully. It must have seemed that he had little to show for the period of his early manhood; it must have seemed that the glittering prizes were to be reserved for the fortunate and brilliant Austen. But dividends are to be reaped in character as well as in achievement. He had learned in a hard school to deal with men; to face realities and to rely on his own efforts. He had graduated in that best of political schools, the school of adversity and struggle. Twenty-five years later another political leader of the future was writing grandiloquently in a German fortress: "At that time my lot in life seemed to me a harsh one; but to-day I see in it the wise workings of Providence. The Goddess of Fate clutched me in her hands and often threatened to smash me; but the will grew stronger as the obstacles increased, and finally the will triumphed. I am thankful for that period of my life, because it hardened me and enabled me to be as tough as I now am." It would probably not have occurred to Neville Chamberlain to express himself after this fashion. But he too had cause to be thankful for those seven years in which, like Jacob of old, he had toiled for no apparent reward. For he too had been hardened by struggle; he too had been rendered tough and resilient by experience of adversity. And so it was that when he turned his face towards home for the last time he

brought with him not the rewards that he had gone out to seek, but a reward unseen and yet inestimable which was to stand him and his Country in good stead in later days.

THE CHAMBERLAIN CITY

IT was not a particularly joyous homecoming to Birmingham in 1897. In view of the defeat of the high hopes which had been formed with regard to the sisal project eight years before, it could hardly be that. There was this much to be said for it from Neville Chamberlain's personal viewpoint: it cut him loose from a venture which was doomed to failure, and set him free for new and unhampered enterprise. For all that, a fresh start under the shadow of previous failure had not the same quality of inspiration as a clear start unencumbered and unprejudiced. It was therefore necessarily a somewhat depressed young man who arrived to pitch his tent in Birmingham once more. Fortunately for him he was in Birmingham. For there was little need for anybody to be depressed in the Birmingham of 1897: and especially there was no need for depression in the case of anybody bearing the name of Chamberlain.

By 1897 Birmingham was a great city. She stood as the symbol of industrial progress and civil pride. The greatness of her industry was reflected not only in the prosperity of her merchants but in the modern civic amenities by which the Corporation had been able to benefit the lives of its citizens. Birmingham might well have been a city of thriving industry without Joseph Chamberlain: its reputation as a model city was due, however, in large measure to his pioneering vision and his administrative skill. In the pre-Chamberlain days Birmingham had been a city

of reproach, just such a community as was described and condemned by Disraeli in the pages of *Sybil*. But to Joseph Chamberlain there came the vision of a new and better order of things: "By God's will," he said, "this town shall not know itself." Nor did it. The slums were demolished, and through what had been dark and crooked alleys, harbouring disease and fostering thieves, there was cut the great thoroughfare of Corporation Street. This street, wide, spacious, and clean, symbolized Chamberlain's new order of things. He next turned his attention to the water and gas supplies of the city, which he acquired for the corporation. The result was that Birmingham, so far as its municipal services went, became the first of the planned cities. Its inhabitants, instead of regarding themselves as thrust within its confines in squalid conditions by inexorable economic law, realized that they were citizens of no mean city, and took pride in the prestige of their community.

The great position which Joseph Chamberlain's work for Birmingham secured for him in the hearts and minds of his fellow countrymen is best evidenced by the political sway which he exercised when he moved on from municipal to national affairs. Originally a founder member of the Birmingham Liberal Association, he was the moving spirit in the creation of the Birmingham Caucus, which was to dominate and control the political fortunes of the city. The caucus was in its inception Radical, and was truly mirrored by the Joe Chamberlain of the late 70's and early 80's who was as distasteful to Mr. Gladstone on account of his Radicalism as he was to the Queen by reason of his near-Republicanism. But then the Irish Question and the expansion of his own mental horizon led Joseph Chamberlain to a new and more dynamic political orientation. The outward and visible sign of the processes at work in him

was that the great Radical leader of the Radical caucus joined forces with the Conservative party to turn the Liberal Government of Mr. Gladstone out of office. Few politicians, even in their own strongholds survive an apparent breach with their political past; and it might well have been expected that the well-organized and disciplined caucus would simply reject its leader and continue in the path which it had been founded to follow. In fact nothing of the sort happened. Joseph Chamberlain was assailed by his former Radical allies in the country as a whole with a vigour and stridency which at times passed the bounds of decency. In Birmingham, on the other hand, he retained his hold; in the Elections which followed his break with Mr. Gladstone, he succeeded with the aid of the caucus in gaining every seat for the new Liberal Unionist Party. It was a personal triumph probably unequalled in British political history. It would not have been possible except in the case of a dominant and inspiring personality fortified by the civic consciousness of great work rendered to the city in the past. This striking testimony to Joseph Chamberlain's hold upon the city made it clear that it was in fact the city of the Chamberlains.

In 1897 the great prestige of the Colonial Secretary was not the only nor the most immediate evidence of this fact. There was evidence within the City itself in the person of the numerous members of the Chamberlain clan occupying important civic and industrial positions. The Chamberlain clan, extended by marriage, consisted of, in addition to the Chamberlains themselves, the Kendricks, Nettlefolds, and the Martineaus. All these families were Unitarian and conscientious alike in their application to business and in their punctual discharge of civic obligations.

The result was that the position built up by Joseph Chamberlain was maintained and extended by his kinsmen, who were to be found in many of the most responsible positions in the City. It followed that there was no profound need for pessimism in the case of a young Chamberlain, not quite thirty years of age, returning to Birmingham in quest of the commercial future which the Bahamas had denied him. Neville Chamberlain was especially fortunate in that his uncle Arthur Chamberlain had not followed his brother's example in deserting business for politics, and was at the time of his nephew's return one of the leading members of the business community in Birmingham. So it was that there was no great difficulty in launching the young man, who was experienced in administration though unversed in success, upon his new business career.

In business Neville Chamberlain was associated with three concerns. There was Elliot's Metal Company; there was the famous Birmingham Small Arms Company; and thirdly there was the business acquired from Messrs. Hoskins and Son of manufacturing metal berths for ships. Into his work in these three concerns Neville Chamberlain threw himself with an eagerness in which his natural conscientiousness was reinforced by the resolution that this time with a fair start he would show his worth not only by the quality of his efforts, but by crowning them with success. His long sojourn on Andros Island had had the effect of strengthening his natural qualities. The tenacity and thoroughness which were his by nature had been subjected to an exacting test in the losing battle which he had fought during the sisal experiment.

It was inevitable that such qualities would either be crushed or strengthened. In fact they were proved and tempered by the test through which

they passed. He had had too a rare training in administrative self-reliance, since he had had for a protracted period the absolute governance of a large body of men and a complete control of an extended and experimental enterprise, in which decisions had necessarily to be taken on his sole and prompt responsibility. At the same time the virtual social isolation on Andros Island was calculated to confirm him in his natural reserve. Though naturally more shy and reserved than his brother, it may be that had his life taken a different course at that period of his existence, when young Englishmen of his upbringing are normally receiving their social education, he would have acquired a larger share of the charm and vivacity for which Sir Austen was famous than that with which he is generally credited. As it was however the early and solitary responsibility of Andros Island took the place of the more cheerful and gregarious life which he might otherwise have been leading. On his return at the age of twenty-eight he was considerably more set in his habits and outlook than he would have been eight years earlier. With the inevitable, if irrational, feeling of failure and waste of time very present to his mind, it was natural also that he should feel himself directed to the business in hand to the exclusion of all else.

Though this implied a limitation of social and communal activity, it augured well for his success in business. He made for some time no great mark in social or public life, but was able fully to pull his weight in business. Though he gradually added other activities, the period from 1897 to 1911, that is until he was a man of rather over forty, was lived against a background of absorption in business, and dominated by its requirements. His actual business transactions would be of but little general interest, but they were marked by the same thoroughness and

attention to detail which had characterized his father in the early days of Chamberlain and Nettlefold. Like his father too he did not mind doing his own travelling when occasion demanded. There was one occasion which is invested with a particular significance in view of his great undertaking in the dark days of September 1938.

This was an occasion on which the firm of Hoskins, of which he was a working director, put in a competitive tender for the installing of steel mattresses in ships designed for the Australian passenger service. These ships were being constructed by Messrs. Harland and Wolff at their famous shipbuilding yards at Belfast. When the tenders were examined they were found to be extremely close. One firm, however, followed up their tender with the personal visit of their representative. The firm was Messrs. Hoskins and their representative was Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who travelled overnight from Birmingham to Belfast by way of Liverpool. Mr. Chamberlain's idea was that personal contact paid. On this occasion it was certainly justified, for Messrs. Hoskins secured the order, and Mr. Chamberlain himself received the notification in Birmingham. This was not the last order executed by Messrs. Hoskins for Messrs. Harland and Wolff, and there are people working in that firm to-day who well remember Mr. Chamberlain's visits.

He did not at this time evince any marked interest in politics. It was inevitable however, with his father the most dominating personality in the political life of the day and his brother also a Member of the Government, that he should be drawn to some extent into the political life of Birmingham. Two years after his return he was appointed joint Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham and Midland Liberal Unionist Association and Treasurer of the Imperial

Tariff Committee. Had he been living in a place where the Chamberlain policy in connection with South Africa, which was in many parts of the country a matter of violent controversy, was often more vigorously assailed, he might have been provoked against his natural inclination into a more active participation in politics for the defence of that policy. In Birmingham, however, support for Chamberlain was overwhelming, of which emphatic testimony was given when Mr. Lloyd George attempted to address a meeting in Birmingham in opposition to that policy, and was forced to retire by a back door in the guise of a policeman.

One rather unexpected result of the Boer War upon Neville Chamberlain personally was the fact that it involved him as plaintiff in a libel action. The *Star* was at that time featuring a series of articles alleging the use of political pressure in the securing of Government contracts for cordite. As an instance of this they cited the firm of Kynoch's, the chairman of which was Mr. Arthur Chamberlain. The gravamen of the *Star's* attack was really directed against Joseph Chamberlain and Austen Chamberlain, who were members of the Government, but the libel was upon Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, who was chairman of the company. The case was fought out, and Sir Edward Clarke, who was leading counsel for Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, dealt faithfully with the contention that the attacks should really be regarded as a sort of political fair comment: "the suggestion is," he said, "that the assault was intended to be directed against Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, and that if Mr. Arthur Chamberlain was hit in the attack that was because he enjoyed the privilege of being Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's brother, and he must always remember as a consolation that his brother is in the Cabinet." Mr. Arthur

Chamberlain secured a verdict and damages of £200 after a hearing of five days before Lord Alverstone, the Lord Chief Justice, in March 1901. Neville Chamberlain did even better: the facts and the imputations in his case were different, and the facts on which the *Star* relied had been taken from another paper. The *Star*, discovering and recognizing that these facts were erroneous, did not contest the case of Neville Chamberlain, which was next in the list for hearing after his uncle's case, but agreed to withdraw their statements and make full apology in addition to paying £1,500 by way of indemnity. It may be observed as an illustration of the ways of law and politics in Great Britain that Sir Edward Clarke, who was leading counsel for the Chamberlains, had to withdraw from politics on account of his disagreement with the Chamberlain policy of Protection, while thirty years later Rufus Isaacs, who was leading counsel for the *Star*, found himself, as Lord Reading, a fellow member with Neville Chamberlain of the first National Government.

In the years following the end of the Boer War Neville Chamberlain had become thoroughly established in business. His business remained the central feature of his life, but he now had more leisure to fill in the background with other activities. His hobbies were mainly out of doors, and consisted in cycling, swimming, fishing when the opportunity presented itself, and of course walking at all times. He also interested himself in the Birmingham Athletic Institution. He was not then, and has never been, a great "club man". He was a member of the Union Club in Birmingham, but he himself has remarked that his only claim to prominence there was that he complained about the quality of the steak. He was more active at the Edgbaston and Birmingham Debating Society. Here he was a regular

if not a brilliant performer. The members realized that they were not likely to get any vivid rhetoric from him of the sort which they learnt to expect a little later from Mr. Norman Birkett. But they soon came to realize that in the real business of debate, in answering the arguments of opponents point by point, Mr. Chamberlain was a force to be reckoned with. Another important asset in debate of which he gave early evidence was his imperturbability. From this nothing could shake him, and though he could when need be deliver a crushing retort, he always had his emotions well in hand. Sometimes he essayed epigrams, though not very often. One such, however, delivered on an occasion when the subject of discussion was "the best form of government in normal and abnormal circumstances," has a prophetic interest. In a paraphrase of Lincoln's famous aphorism he declared that "the man or men at the head of any government must be of the people, working for the people, standing by the people."

He developed at this time an active interest in various aspects of municipal life, though not as yet in municipal politics. As early as 1901 for instance he was on the committee of the Council of Birmingham University, incorporated only in the previous year. His father had originally been drawn into municipal politics by his interest in education: Neville Chamberlain added to his interest in education an active participation in the work of hospitals. Because of this interest, and on account of his reputation for business efficiency, he became Chairman of the General Hospital, and Treasurer of the Dispensary Committee. Another and quite different form of activity was his Chairmanship of the National Waterway Association, which had been formed with a view to implementing the recommendations of the Canals Commission in regard to the development and

linking up of canals. In this capacity he was interested in a scheme, which proved abortive, to utilize the canal between Bristol and Birmingham. In addition to all this he was naturally, as a leading business man in the city, an active and hard-working member of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. A detailed account of his activities in these various directions would of course lack general interest at the present time. But mention has been made of them to show that even in the years when Neville Chamberlain is thought of as having been primarily immersed in business, and was in fact engaged in establishing his position in industry, he was never uninterested in public service wherein lay no profit or prospect of personal advancement.

It was inevitable that people in Birmingham, having regard to the increasing scope of the local activities of Joseph Chamberlain's son, should think of him in connection with membership of the Council. His membership actually came about indirectly as a result of the extension of the city boundaries. The proposal to extend them was launched in 1910, and the necessary inquiry was ordered by the Local Government Board, then equivalent to the present Ministry of Health. At this inquiry Neville Chamberlain, who was one of the promoters of the scheme, gave evidence in its support. The Board issued a Provisional Order, but final sanction for the extension of the boundaries could only be given by private Act of Parliament. A private Bill was duly introduced, and Neville Chamberlain went up to London to appear as a witness before a Joint Committee of the Lords and Commons, just as his father had done in the days when the Birmingham Corporation was acquiring the services of the City. In 1911 the scheme came into force, and Neville Chamberlain agreed to submit himself for membership of

the City Council. In view of his various services and of his eminent connections, it was proposed that he should let his name go forward for an Aldermanic vacancy, which would obviate the necessity of popular election. To this Chamberlain would not agree, and he dismissed the suggestion with a terse and characteristic announcement in line with his principles: "If I am going to represent the rate-payers I will be elected by the ratepayers." He was returned in the Elections of that year for the All Saints Ward, and thus took the first small but significant step of his career in public life.

Important however as was his election to the Birmingham City Council, it was not the most important event of his life in 1911. Some years previously Neville Chamberlain had attended the wedding of his brother, which was, as befitted a leading member of the Unionist Party, a fashionable social event. Among the guests was a charming young lady, half English and half Irish, by name Miss Ann Vere Cole. She came of an Irish sporting family, the daughter of Major Cole, and the cousin of Lord Monteagle. A little further back in her ancestry was the poet Aubrey De Vere. After the death of her father her mother had re-married, her second husband being Colonel Studd, brother of Sir Kynaston Studd, famous as a cricketer and subsequently Lord Mayor of London. With all these eminent connections however, perhaps her most interesting relation was her brother Horace de Vere Cole. His distinction lay in an unusual sphere, for he was England's premier practical joker. He had to his credit many elaborate jests, but one is worthy of remembrance for that simplicity which is said to be the hall-mark of genius. This was the occasion when he arrived in Piccadilly at the most crowded hour of that fashionable thoroughfare, and calmly held up its traffic for

a protracted period while he engaged himself in an agreeably leisurely manner with digging up the road. He was not only a practical joker, for he was very witty in conversation and something of a dilettante. With all his gifts he combined a forceful and vivid personality, which usually made a strong, though not always an entirely favourable, impression upon those with whom he came in contact.

Miss Cole had a good deal of her brother's gaiety and charm, without the addition of its masculine assertiveness. She made a very pleasing impression upon Neville Chamberlain, who at the time of meeting her had reached the age of thirty-seven without having lost his heart to any one of the opposite sex. He had reached therefore the age at which bachelors tend to remain single. But in his case fate decreed otherwise. Miss Cole in her turn was attracted by the unassuming brother of the famous politician, in whom a longer acquaintance revealed those reserves of character which have since become apparent to an ever-widening public. In 1911, six years after they had first met, they were married, the bridegroom then being in his forty-third year. It is interesting to note that Sir Austen Chamberlain was not married until the same age, while Joseph Chamberlain had been fifty-two at the time of his third marriage.

The Chamberlain marriage has been a supremely happy one, and the steady calm of their domestic life has been unruffled through all the turbulent storms which have assailed Mr. Chamberlain's period of public life. Mrs. Chamberlain has been a great success both as a wife and as a consort to a leading statesman. Her success in the second capacity could perhaps have been less easily and less confidently anticipated than her success in the first. She has comparatively little of the *grande dame* about her,

and has no great intellectual or political pretensions. But the very absence of these things has perhaps contributed to a certain natural dignity which is allied to her undeniable Irish charm. Both dignity and charm receive an unexpected ally in her natural vagueness. Mrs. Chamberlain not only is a little vague: she looks a little vague. The guest at the reception, or the political follower, is generally delighted at any mark of recognition from a great lady. He, or she, is delighted to receive such recognition at the hands of a lady of apparent and studied political and social efficiency. But his delight is doubled, and his self-esteem proportionately fortified, when just the right recollection is made by a gracious lady whom two minutes previously he has feared will fail to recollect his existence at all. Politically her outstanding characteristics are her strong common sense and her absolute discretion. The latter is a quality of the very first importance, for it enables Mr. Chamberlain to confide in her without reserve. In fact it is his practice to confide in her absolutely. He tells her everything, and never once has a hint of what she has been told escaped from her. She rarely talks politics, even to her most intimate friends. This quality of discretion has made her the perfect confidante, the possession of which is a great strength and a great comfort to a statesman bearing the heavy burden of National responsibility.

In a famous speech Lady Baldwin of Bewdley, then Mrs. Baldwin, declared that but for herself her husband would have retired from politics considerably earlier than in fact he did. Mrs. Chamberlain can go one better. She has said in reference to her husband that "he would never have gone into politics but for me." This is quite correct, for in the year before his marriage Mr. Chamberlain had told a reporter that he had "no intention now or ever of



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going into politics." In the same way that Joseph Chamberlain had received his invitation to stand for the Birmingham Council while on holiday in Devonshire with Neville Chamberlain's mother, and had been urged by her to accept, Mr. Chamberlain was urged by his wife to reconsider his decision as to politics and to enter into the political life of the city. That she quickly took her place by his side in his public activity is evidenced by a letter written by Austen Chamberlain to his father in 1911 in which he described a meeting of the Unionist Association at the Birmingham Town Hall: "It would have rejoiced you to see and hear the warm welcome given to Neville and Annie at the Town Hall and to feel, as we all felt, how strong were the ties between the Meeting and the family."

As soon as Mr. Chamberlain was returned to the City Council he began to display his natural interest in two subjects which were not considered to be of paramount importance by the pre-War business community and which he, as much as any man, was destined to invest with their true significance. These two subjects were Health and Housing. His interest was speedily recognized by his election as Chairman of the Town-Planning Committee. The principle of town planning had not then secured that full measure of adoption which has since fallen to it. The law of that time restricted Town-Planning Schemes to areas as yet unbuilt, and therefore operations had in the main to be confined to the outskirts of Birmingham. Nevertheless his Committee marked out Birmingham into sections for Town-Planning purposes, and gave the City a flying start in this respect, with the result that Birmingham obtained official blessing for the first two schemes sanctioned in the country for town planning in built-up areas. In the sphere of public health Birmingham was at that time

very fortunate in its Medical Officer of Health, Sir John Robertson. Of him Mr. Chamberlain was a warm admirer and a keen supporter. He had an exceptional personal reason for interesting himself in anything which was calculated to reduce the rates of maternal mortality. He is entitled to a large share of the credit for the ante-natal clinics which were then set up in Birmingham for the treatment of expectant mothers. These clinics were voluntary, but received the active support of the health committee of the Council. Nor did he neglect the cultural and recreational side of the city's life. During the period when he was councillor and during his Lord Mayoralty he was instrumental in securing the extension of the Art Gallery and the completion of the Natural History Collection. Another of his own personal interests was reflected when he influenced the formation of a municipal orchestra.

All this was in the piping days of peace. It is true that impending Armageddon was casting its long shadow ever further across the peaceful scene. But few save the most prescient had eyes to see it or ears to hear the distant rumbling of War. For Neville Chamberlain they were years of happy family life, busy public activity devoted to the constructive things of peace. He and his wife had taken a pleasant and comfortable home in Westbourne Avenue in a residential part of the city, and here their two children Dorothy and Frank were born. It was this daughter Dorothy who was to make Mr. Chamberlain a grandfather in the crisis month of 1938. But the outbreak of war, which quickened the tempo of national life, had the effect of slowing down the work of the Birmingham City Council. Nevertheless it did nothing to diminish the importance and responsibility of the Chief Magistrate of the City. This office was held at the outbreak of war by Mr. Chamberlain's

cousin, Colonel Ernest Martineau, who had been Lord Mayor since 1912. He, however, left the city to proceed to France in command of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Territorial) and in November 1915 Mr. Chamberlain was elected Lord Mayor of Birmingham. In holding this office he was continuing a most distinguished family tradition. His father, whose death in 1914 after five years of illness and enforced retirement had been a great grief to Neville Chamberlain, had been Lord Mayor some forty years before. In addition to him and to Colonel Martineau, five of Mr. Chamberlain's uncles had attained the chief civic dignity: they were Joseph's brother Richard Chamberlain, William and George Kenrick, Thomas Martineau, father of Ernest Martineau, and Charles Beale who had been four times Lord Mayor.

The Lord Mayor of a provincial city, or the Mayor of a provincial borough, has a unique chance of impressing his personality upon his fellow citizens. To a degree which is impossible in a case of a Lord Mayor of London, who numbers among his citizens so many of the great ones of the world, the Lord Mayor of a provincial city is in a very real sense both chief magistrate and chief citizen. This applies even more strongly to a war-time Lord Mayor than to one whose term of office falls in normal times. Mr. Chamberlain's was a war-time Lord Mayoralty. This did not mean that there was an entire supersession of the normal duties in peace. Mr. Chamberlain like his predecessors, was an *ex-officio* member of every committee of the Corporation. So far as was humanly possible, he made it his business to attend every meeting of every committee. As far as circumstances permitted he applied the maxim of "Business as Usual" to the corporate life and amenities of the city of Birmingham. Nor did he neglect the civic interests of his

pre-mayoral days. His interest in the work of the hospitals was if anything increased by the urgency of the times; but he found time too to continue to assist in the indisputably peace-time activities of the regulation of the University. So firmly was he convinced that the conditions of war should not if possible mean the entire abandonment of the things of peace that he set himself also to see that progress was made in the provision of means of recreation for those whose civic destinies he was directing.

There was one respect in which Mr. Chamberlain's work as chief magistrate closely recalled the activity of his father forty years before. This was in the initiative which he took in arranging for the Corporation to buy out the Birmingham Bus Company and transform it into a municipal enterprise.

Joseph Chamberlain it will be remembered, had acquired the water and gas undertakings for the Corporation. By the time of his son's Lord Mayoralty the tramways were also a municipal concern. It followed that any surplus from the profit of the tramways could be devoted to relief of rates. The buses on the other hand, were a private enterprise and had the advantage of being a more modern form of transport than the trams. Mr. Chamberlain saw that there was a danger that in time the superior attractions of the buses might virtually oust the tramways, which would then, instead of affording relief to the ratepayers, involve them in the ownership of an unprofitable concern. That this was no remote possibility was evidenced by the example of Glasgow at that time. But, if Mr. Chamberlain had a warning in the fate of the tramways in Glasgow he had an example and an inspiration in the action recently taken by the progressive Corporation of the City of Liverpool, which had acquired the buses for the municipality. There was opposition: but there

always is. Mr. Chamberlain persevered; and the buses passed into the ownership and direction of the municipality.

There was opposition of a more formidable and authoritative character to another proposal which the exigencies of war induced Mr. Chamberlain to put forward. This was the Birmingham War Savings Bank, which subsequently developed into the Birmingham Municipal Savings Bank. Most cities and centres of population had already got either a Penny Bank or some similar institution for husbanding the resources of the people. Birmingham in so many respects the pioneer of civic progress, was not thus equipped. It seemed to Mr. Chamberlain therefore, when on the inauguration of the War Savings Movement Birmingham was invited to set up a War Savings Committee, that something more permanent and fundamental was required. His idea was to establish a Municipal Savings Bank. The first opposition came from Whitehall, not always too enthusiastic in its reception of new ideas. Mr. Chamberlain's worst enemy, however, could not charge him with lack of persistence. Again he persevered, and the first round was his. In April 1916 a Bill was introduced into Parliament, the effect of which would have been to authorize local authorities of centres with a minimum population of fifty thousand to establish Municipal Savings Banks. The introduction of the Bill was greeted with a fresh storm of criticism from a new quarter. This time it was from the Joint Stock Banks, which considered that the proposals threatened their own positions. For the time being their opposition prevailed. In the summer it was decided not to proceed with the Bill as it then stood.

Mr. Chamberlain, however, was far from admitting defeat. He followed the principle of seeking personal contact with his adversary, and went to London to

see if some accommodation could not be arrived at. In London he had talks with Mr. Vassar Smith, Chairman of Lloyds Bank, and Sir Edward Holden of the London City and Midland Bank. The difficulties were ironed out and a compromise arrangement agreed upon, by which the right was to apply only to the local authorities of centres with a population of 250,000. A new Bill was introduced embodying this limitation and certain others, notably the figure of £200 as the maximum of individual accumulation. The Bill passed into law in August 1916 and became the War Loan Investment Act. Perhaps the most serious limitations of this measure as finally passed into law, was that it restricted the lifetime of such municipal savings banks to a period of three months after the War. About this however Mr. Chamberlain had other ideas: "I promise you," he said, "that if it is really shown to meet a need, not all the bankers in Lombard Street will prevent its becoming a permanent part of the municipal undertaking." Nor in fact did they, for on this conclusion of the War Mr. Chamberlain was able to secure the establishment of the bank as a permanent institution.

Unexpectedly enough, the establishment of the Municipal Savings Bank proved to be therefore perhaps the most permanent contribution of Mr. Chamberlain to the civic life of Birmingham. But the most important aspect of his work at the time was undoubtedly that connected with defence against air attack. In January of 1916 Birmingham was subjected to an air raid by German Zeppelins, which resulted in sixty-seven deaths. The possibility of repetition constituted a threat to the City which Mr. Chamberlain rightly interpreted as demanding action on the part of the Chief Magistrate. He summoned a meeting of the Chief Constables and mayors of the boroughs within the Birmingham area with a view

to drawing up a scheme to co-ordinate anti-aircraft defence. The effect of the scheme, which was produced by the combined wisdom of these worthies was to introduce uniformity of lighting restrictions into the towns near Birmingham, and to remove the anti-aircraft guns from the factories and crowded areas, which they were designed to defend, to the surrounding hills, where with the aid of powerful searchlights they were in a better position to carry that design into effect.

Communications were also organized between watchers on the coast and police and the authorities in the munition factories.

Mr. Chamberlain was charged with the duty of going to London to secure official approval of the scheme. In London he saw General French and the Home Secretary—whom he was later to know much better in the capacity of Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Government of which he was himself head. The scheme received official approval. But more than that: it worked. Raids were repeated on Birmingham in 1917 and 1918 but, as a result of these precautions, they were beaten off with far less material loss. In November 1916 Mr. Chamberlain was re-elected to a further term of office as Lord Mayor. He and Mrs. Chamberlain looked forward to at least one more year of active and useful service. For Mrs. Chamberlain, too, the wartime Mayoralty imposed fresh duties. In peace time the functions of a Lady Mayoress are primarily of a social character. The exigencies of war gave Mrs Chamberlain an opportunity for wider and more useful occupation. She took charge of an organization which was set up in Birmingham to render any necessary assistance to the widows and relatives of Birmingham men killed in the War. Not that she confined her work to the dependants of the soldiers. She laboured for the

comfort of troops on active service overseas, and did not forget the unfortunates who were prisoners of war in Germany: for she was responsible for the office which sent out about a hundred thousand garments to soldiers and parcels to a large number of prisoners of war.

The war work of the Chamberlains was not to end until the conclusion of the War itself. But the Lord Mayoralty was to terminate prematurely in dramatic and unexpected fashion. One day towards the end of 1916, shortly after his re-election to office, Mr. Chamberlain was in London on civic business. His business concluded, he was pacing up and down the platforms at Euston, a lean, thoughtful, top-hatted figure, waiting for the train which was to take him back to Birmingham. He never caught that train, for a man hurried up to him and touched him on the arm. "Mr. Neville Chamberlain?" he inquired. Mr. Chamberlain nodded assent. "Will you come at once to Downing Street," he continued, "Mr. Lloyd George wants to see you urgently."

Mr. Chamberlain turned and went at once. For, though the Lord Mayor was a great man in Birmingham, Mr. Lloyd George, as war-time Premier, was a great man without restriction of territory or sphere. His conversation with Mr. Lloyd George was at length to transfer Mr. Chamberlain from municipal to national affairs.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SERVICE

BY the end of 1916 the nations of the world were locked in Herculean struggle. But vast as was the arena of war and numerous as were the side-shows being enacted upon it, the passage of the war-laden months went to show more and more clearly that the issue depended on the great central struggle between Germany and the forces of the British Empire. By the end of 1916 French man power, which had borne the major brunt of initial conflict, was on the wane: the great Russian steam roller, of which so much had been hoped in 1914, was showing signs of going into reverse: the smaller Allies were exhausted by their efforts, and the adhesion to the Allied cause of the great power of the United States lay still in the future. It was a black hour for the forces of freedom.

Great victories had been won both by sea and air, and heroic deeds of valour had been added to the crowded annals of our country's history. The British citizen soldiery, fortified by that small and wonderful nucleus of regular soldiery and cradled in generations of freedom and right breeding, were proving themselves fully a match for the trained and conscript hordes of Central Europe. But a war in modern times is not fought solely on the field of battle, nor can it be decided by valour and military competence alone. Modern warfare is a total struggle of the mobilized forces of one nation or group of nations against another. This was a fact appreciated in

pre-War Germany, where the foundations for warfare had been well and truly laid. In England, Liberal, Democratic, Individualistic—if not Isolationist—as she was, appreciation of the vital necessity of mobilizing and organizing the national resources lagged behind the realization of the need for a large military force. There was still in 1916 a disposition in high quarters, and among certain elements of the population, to regard the conduct of the War as a thing to be discharged according to the peace-time precepts of a Parliamentary Democracy. But there was a growing conviction that war cannot be won by partial methods, and that discussion must yield to action, and rights to duties. Only by total dedication can Democracy wage a war to a successful conclusion.

It was the growing realization of these truths that was the basis of the satisfaction which was generally felt at the appointment of Mr. Lloyd George to the Premiership. Though only an amateur strategist and lacking many of the qualities which are essential to a good organizer, Mr. Lloyd George had at any rate the qualities of vision and inspiration, which were beyond price at such a time. Certainly the author of this book would not wish to do anything which would even seem to belittle the services of Mr. Lloyd George in those dark and dangerous days. He was fortunate in many of the instruments that lay ready to his hand; fortunate in the last stages of the War in the propaganda genius of Lord Northcliffe; fortunate above all in the inexhaustible resources and the invincible spirit of the British peoples. But Mr. Lloyd George had, then as subsequently, the defects of his qualities. His breadth of vision and power of inspiration were not harnessed to a sufficient comprehension of the importance of detail or the necessity for preliminary spade-work.

These things, quite as much as vision and inspiration, are essential to the business of organizing National Service. They are matters in which Mr. Chamberlain would not himself fail. Pitchforked into a position in which proper provision had not been made for fundamentals, his failure was inevitable.

The principle of setting up a department to deal with the increasingly difficult problem of National Service had been approved by the Asquith Cabinet on the 30th of November 1916. The suggestion then was that the scope should include all men up to sixty and possibly women as well. The details were worked out by the then Minister of Munitions, Mr. Edwin Montague. The resulting draft of the Bill to put the new department into operation came before the new War Cabinet on the 14th of December, at which time it happened that Mr. Lloyd George was ill, and therefore absent from their deliberations. No doubt as the result of his absence only provisional decisions were arrived at, one of which was that a Director of National Service should be appointed. Other recommendations however were that the civil and military sides should be kept distinct, in order to offset any suspicion that the adoption of compulsory national service for civil purposes would bring them under military control. Again the Cabinet took the view that the line of demarcation between the functions of the Ministry of Labour and the Director of National Service should be clearly defined at an early date. This matter Mr. Arthur Henderson undertook to discuss with the new Minister of Labour and his colleagues.

To the wary man, or the experienced politician, the danger signals would clearly have been evidenced with these recommendations. It would have been obvious that the scheme was being extemporized without the ground having been properly prepared;

that there would almost inevitably be trouble between the Ministry of Labour and the new organization; that there might well be friction between the military and civil authorities; that the success of the whole scheme was necessarily contingent upon the principle of compulsion, which might not be adopted. It may be that considerations of this sort limited the enthusiasm of Mr. Montague for the post. He was the man whom Mr. Lloyd George and the War Cabinet had in mind; but he declined the offer. There seems subsequently to have been an idea in Mr. Lloyd George's mind that if Mr. Montague had been Director instead of Mr. Chamberlain, the scheme would have been a success. The hypothesis that Mr. Montague would have succeeded where Mr. Chamberlain failed is one which it is perhaps unnecessary to discuss. Mr. Montague being unwilling, whom could they appoint as Director? Mr. Chamberlain was not a politician, but he was naturally not unknown to members of the Coalition Government, of which his brother was a member. Those who knew him could speak highly of his municipal and business experience. He was the Cabinet's ultimate choice; or, as Mr. Lloyd George has somewhat ungraciously put it, "we eventually fell back on Mr. Neville Chamberlain." There was at that time no acquaintance between Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Lloyd George himself has written: "He was appointed in a hurry, as I had to announce the appointment in the House of Commons in my speech on the policy of the new Government." It is a sufficient, though sad commentary on the circumstances in which the Directorship of National Service was launched, that the supremely important matter of the Director should be hurried on account of a debate in the House of Commons.

It was in these circumstances that Mr. Chamberlain received the message at Euston Station. He at once went to Downing Street, where the Prime Minister put to him the offer of appointment as Director of National Service. In accordance with his dynamic methods, and with the particular Parliamentary requirements of the occasion, Mr. Lloyd George gave him no time to consider the proposal. He wanted an immediate decision, and Mr. Chamberlain was not afforded any opportunity of discussing the matter with his friends in Birmingham. Though not a politician, he was sufficiently an astute man of business and of affairs to realize some of the difficulties inherent in the situation. Above all the proposition lacked that quality of precision which his own clear-cut mentality valued so highly. His powers were not definite, and his instructions were nebulous. Misgivings therefore he inevitably had; but he felt that, whatever his personal misgivings, at such a time no call to service should go unanswered. He accepted, and returned at once to Birmingham to put his affairs in order before taking up his new duties. That night the Prime Minister made his announcement in the House of Commons, and Mr. Chamberlain ceased to be Lord Mayor of Birmingham and assumed the more onerous responsibility of the first British Director of National Service.

The new Director was to embark on a task of vague proportions and ill-defined powers, in extemporized accommodation. In this mass of unknown quantities, he decided at least to have among his personnel men whom he knew and on whom he could rely. He brought with him, therefore, from Birmingham the City Treasurer Arthur Collins, to act as his private secretary, the Town Clerk, Ernest Hiley, to act as Deputy Director General. He also brought with him a Scots lawyer, called Robert

Horne, who was to make a lightning political ascent in the years that followed. As so often happens, when the timing of the creation of new departments is related mainly to the need of political gesture, no proper accommodation was immediately available for the new Department. They had to be content with the makeshift accommodation in the St. Ermin's Hotel, near Westminster, which was at that time in process of being adapted for use as Government offices. It was in an atmosphere of makeshift that Mr. Chamberlain underwent the whole unhappy period of his Directorship. Like most makeshift expedients, it was not without its lighter side, and the story is related of how one day an important conference was interrupted by the brusque throwing open of the door and the unannounced apparition of a small messenger-girl who walked straight up to Mr. Chamberlain, and asked in earnest piping voice; "Please, Mr. Chamberlain, may we have our tea-pot back?"

But the background was serious, as well as being hectic and at times chaotic. Mr. Chamberlain had made the mistake—if one can rightly call a mistake what was an acceptance with misgivings of the position for patriotic reasons—of not finding out in advance the precise definition of his powers. This was the more important since he was soon in conflict with the military chiefs, who had a tendency to regard the Department as within the scope of military authority, and since the new Department was inevitably unpopular with existing departments, who regarded the activities of Mr. Chamberlain and his staff as a poaching upon their preserves. In such circumstances the work of the Department could only have been successful if the authority of the Government had been placed more resolutely behind it. As it was, the Government was engaged in the

difficult balancing feat of endeavouring to keep simultaneously in play the conduct of a world war and the lively remnants of Liberal democracy. It was due to this dual preoccupation on the part of the Government that the system of industrial conscription, which would have supplied the surest foundation for the success of the National Service Scheme, was not proceeded with.

The reason for this was the attitude of the Labour Party, which represented the antagonism of organized labour to industrial conscription, even as a war-time measure. A certain amount of dilution of labour had already been carried through, and to secure smooth passage for it, the Government had felt constrained to give a pledge against the introduction of industrial conscription. "Accordingly," in the words of Mr. Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs*, "the Cabinet agreed that having regard to the feelings of organized Labour on the subject of Industrial Compulsion, and the pledges given by the late Government, and to the volume of preliminary work necessary for the creation of an adequate and efficient machine, local and central, it would be necessary to proceed, in the first instance, on lines of voluntary service and transference of labour without a Bill." Industrial conscription was to be held in reserve, and, to quote Mr. Lloyd George again, "in the meantime it would be the duty of the Director to set up for voluntary enrolment and transference machinery which might hereafter serve the purpose of compulsion, if compulsion became necessary. . . ."

The position in short was that one of the reasons for rejecting the compulsory system was the "volume of preliminary work necessary to the creation of an adequate and efficient machine." But Mr. Chamberlain with his extemporized staff and makeshift offices was to set up the machinery for a voluntary

system. Is there any reason to suppose that machinery for a voluntary system would be easier to organize than machinery for a compulsory system? Experience would suggest rather the reverse. For, whatever the drawbacks of compulsion, it does have the merit of defining exactly the scope of the matter to be dealt with.

What then was the task which Mr. Chamberlain was left to achieve under a voluntary system?

The object of the task was nothing less than the organization of the man-power of the country in such a way as to feed the army with recruits and to continue simultaneously to maintain industry. That objective has only to be stated for it to be realized at once how difficult of fulfilment it would necessarily be without recourse to compulsory powers. The Army must necessarily have the first call on man-power, and then the essential industries. Of course it became necessary to decide which were essential industries; and any system of priorities which such a decision involves, itself partakes of the nature of compulsion. Nevertheless the voluntary character of the scheme continued to be stressed. Thus the first item of Mr. Chamberlain's programme was to organize a voluntary enrolment of all the available labour in the country. It was also necessary to compile a census of the labour requirements of the various industries, and to use this census as the basis for the system of priorities, by which men who were drafted into the Army could be replaced from other sources in such a way that the essential industries should not be depleted.

It is clear that for the new Department to be of any substantial value, it had to operate on a wide scale. It is equally clear that there could be no success for the scheme unless there was a large enrolment of volunteers to provide the pool from



CONSERVATIVE CHIEFS

From left to right: Neville Chamberlain as Minister of Health, Stanley Baldwin (Prime Minister), Austen Chamberlain (Foreign Secretary), L. S. Amery (Dominions Minister), leaving a funeral service at Westminster Abbey in May 1925

which the Director would be able to draw the manpower which was required. The project, for which the elements of success were so conspicuously absent, nevertheless started in an atmosphere of energetic good-will. On the 10th of January 1917, the existing Man-power Distributing Board was dissolved and its functions transferred to the new Department. At the same time Mr. Chamberlain was asked to prepare a Memorandum setting out what he conceived to be the requirements of the new undertaking. This, after a conference with the Prime Minister, Mr. Henderson, the Minister of Labour, and other Ministers, he succeeded in producing in just over a week. His Memorandum was then examined by the War Cabinet with somewhat disappointing results. Various modifications were made in Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, and the Government only authorized the calling up of thirty thousand men from agriculture, twenty thousand from mining, and fifty thousand semi-skilled and unskilled munition workers; outside these special groups all men between eighteen and twenty-two were to be called up. The Government also decided that the Employment Exchanges should remain under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Labour, who was to put them at the disposal of the Director of National Service. Actually Mr. Chamberlain had proposed in his Memorandum that he should take over the Labour Exchanges as a clearing-house for the sorting and transference of volunteers. In fact one of the important contributory causes of the failure of the scheme was the difficulty which Mr. Chamberlain found in making any arrangement with the Labour Exchanges which could put into operation the work of transference.

On the 6th of February Mr. Chamberlain made his first big appearance outside Birmingham as a public speaker. The occasion was the meeting at

the Central Hall, Westminster, which was designed to launch the new proposal. Mr. Chamberlain gave a business-like, if rhetorically uninspired, outline of the methods by which he intended to implement the idea of National Service, and Mr. Lloyd George flavoured the dish with a shorter but more artistic effort. It still remained, however, for Mr. Chamberlain's appointment to be sanctioned by Parliament. To this end the Ministry of National Service Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on the 22nd of February. Liberal democracy was again to the fore in debates—it generally is in debates—and there appeared to be more concern felt in some quarters that no hint of compulsion should trouble the scene, than that the undertaking itself should succeed. The result was that the Act, in the form in which it finally became law, contained provisions that there should be no resort to compulsion without the express sanction of Parliament.

It is realized to-day, more fully perhaps than in 1917, that any great voluntary efforts—and most compulsory systems too—depend for their success upon the efficacy and power of the propaganda that they command. Mr. Lloyd George's most severe critic could hardly charge him with being unaware of the great importance of propaganda; and in the case of the National Service Scheme of 1917 considerable sums were allocated to a publicity scheme designed to focus public attention upon the new Department and thereby to induce the public to utilize its machinery. The publicity, however, the details of which were not of course Mr. Lloyd George's concern, was not a success. It lacked that subtle quality of inspiration without which publicity defeats its own ends. Thus, to point the need for labour, posters were exhibited depicting the hands of an apparently aged man, long past the capacity for

manual work, stretched forth in impotent supplication through the bars of what looked uncommonly like a prison cell. Publicity, which the restrictions imposed by Parliament had made an absolute condition precedent to the success of the scheme, was not a side of the business for which Mr. Chamberlain was, either by temperament or by experience, particularly well qualified. He was only three years short of fifty, but his life had consisted mainly of business and administration: oratory had played but a minor role, and propaganda a still smaller part. Mr. Chamberlain had never acquired the flair for good propaganda. It is an ironical thing that the man who has made what have been perhaps the most effective gestures of modern times has made his best propaganda, as it were, by accident. He has taken steps because he considered them the reasonable and obvious steps to take, and has achieved spectacular results, which are the envy of totalitarian propagandists. But these happy strokes do not mean that Mr. Chamberlain is a skilful propagandist. In the ordinary way, it would be truer to say that he, in common with a large number of his colleagues, while politically conscious of the value of propaganda, has not found the key which unlocks its secrets. In regard to the publicity for the National Service schemes, Mr. Lloyd George has been critical of Mr. Chamberlain's efforts; and in this regard there is substance in his point. Criticisms of Mr. Chamberlain by Mr. Lloyd George in regard to administration must be considered in the light of Mr. Chamberlain's superior administrative powers. In the field of propaganda however, the position is reversed, and Mr. Lloyd George's instinct is a surer guide.

What with bad publicity, insufficient powers, Parliamentary and Governmental restrictions, and inter-departmental friction, most of the expected

difficulties, and some that were unexpected, beset the project. Voluntary enrolment was disappointing to those who insisted in believing that two and a half years was not long enough to exhaust voluntary effort. The appeal was for half a million men; but, after two months, less than a third of this total had been secured. The men who did put their names down were for the most part of no value to the success of the scheme, since three out of four were already engaged in work of national importance and were therefore not available for the pool. Of the quarter not so engaged, less than half turned out to be suitable for the essential trades, which it was the object of the scheme to man. The men who had been promised from agriculture, mining, and munitions had still not materialized four months after the date of promise, and the War Office was full of complaints about the non-success of the scheme in producing recruits for the army. Nor could these complications be wondered at. Whatever the merits of a voluntary system, its ultimate drawback is that a voluntary system will never bring service from the shirkers, the evasionists, and the obstructionists. People who have been unwilling to co-operate for two and a half years are unlikely to be brought to repentance by the mere magic of new names and revised methods. So it was in 1917. Men had been exempted from army service for various reasons and under various pretexts, although they were fit for the trenches. The same employers, who had helped to secure their exemption, flung themselves with zeal into the battle to prevent these men from being transferred by the new Department. They had a natural disinclination to surrender these tried and skilled workers for other and less experienced labour. Against this disinclination the Director's argument of patriotism, reinforced by no sanction of compul-

sion, laboured too often in vain. The employers had a powerful ally in the trade unions to which the men belonged. They too played a part in opposing the withdrawal of labour on the ground that its replacement by less skilled craftsmen would necessarily lead to the deterioration of the standards of trade unionism, for whose recognition they had laboured so long.

There might have been ways and means of finding a solution to these complex problems along the lines of persuasion and negotiation. But, where the margin of labour was now so small and the cream of the results of voluntary effort had now been taken off, it was perhaps unlikely that they would be found quickly by a man new to his task, upon ground unprepared, and with machinery hastily improvised. In fact no such solution was found. The results of the first few months of the Department can best be summarized in the terse language of a Ministerial answer to a question in the House of Commons relating to the new Department given on the 17th of April 1917. "Over 16,000 volunteers have been offered to employers, of whom 2,804 have started work, and 1,826 are awaiting replies from employers: in addition 5,765 are awaiting decision by National Service Sub-Commissioners of protests against transfer." This meant that at a time when £60,000 had already been spent on publicizing the scheme, less than 3,000 men had actually been placed in employment. Even official apologists might well shrink from the task of interpreting such a result as a success.

In undertakings such as the National Service Scheme it is undoubtedly the first step that counts. A scheme launched in happy auspices, and showing immediate results, may go from strength to strength, but a bad start is fatal; for, instead of gathering

impetus as it goes, it is likely to succumb to the indifference, if not derision, which its ill-success arouses. It soon began to be apparent that this process was at work in the Department of National Service. Stories began to circulate, first as whispered rumour, and then in bolder accents and greater volume, of men who, having volunteered and thrown up their jobs, found themselves, without work and wages, holding themselves at the "disposal of the Director." Such stories, with their suggestion of confusion, which was not in fact absent from the Department's activities, would have discounted a much superior propaganda to that which had in fact been put out. The writing was becoming apparent on the wall, and the letters spelt defeat.

In these disheartening circumstances Mr. Chamberlain worked on through the summer of 1917. It does not lie in his nature readily to give in; but the atmosphere of confusion and dissipated energy was bitter indeed to a man in whose nature is rooted a methodical and business-like precision. The complexities remained, and the difficulty of their solution was accentuated by the poor showing of the Department to date. In July Mr. Chamberlain sent a report to the War Cabinet recommending the rescission of all Government exemptions granted to men of the younger classes. As an argument for this measure he pointed out that with things as they were there were so few vacancies in industrial life to fill that, if his proposal was not adopted, "he did not see that there was much object in the continued existence of his Department."

Mr. Chamberlain was not alone in his doubts as to the efficacy of the work done by the Department. A select Committee, which had been set up by the House of Commons to advise upon economies in administration, gave, among its more detailed recom-

mendations, its general opinion that the results obtained by the Department for National Service were not commensurate with the preparations made and the heavy preliminary outlay of money. An impartial investigation of the results suggests that the Committee's view was correct. From the inauguration of the Department until the 1st of August 1917 its expenditure was £192,709, of which about £87,000 had been spent in publicity. The return for this outlay was the placing in employment of 19,951 men and 14,256 women, the distribution of 68,595 soldiers and civilians for agricultural work, and the discharge of certain arrangements with regard to part-time work.

These results were of course greatly inferior to what had been hoped of the Department. Early in August Mr. Chamberlain resigned his office.

Wherein lay the causes of failure, and where should be placed the blame? The fundamental causes of failure were implicit in the conditions in which the task was undertaken. An undertaking of such magnitude could not be successfully launched in the absence of proper preparation, and above all in the absence of a real comprehension by Parliament of the attitude of mind in which such a venture should be regarded, and of the authority with which its executives should be clothed. A more experienced politician than Mr. Chamberlain then was might well have insisted on a more precise definition of his powers before accepting the responsibility of his position at all. After his resignation, the Department was reconstructed in the light of the hard experience of his eight months of office. The new Director General, Sir Auckland Geddes, had the advantage of a much clearer delineation of his powers and position, including a precise agreement with the Ministry of Labour defining and differentiating the respective

functions of the two Departments. The result was that Sir Auckland was able to get much better results than had rewarded Mr. Chamberlain's term of office.

What about the responsibility of Mr. Chamberlain himself? Mr. Lloyd George has placed on record his conviction that he had chosen the wrong man for the job: "The Cabinet was fully alive," he writes of the Department of National Service, "to this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and several efforts were made to help the new Department to tackle its job; but they were all futile. A vein of self-sufficient obstinacy in the new Minister contributed to the difficulties that baffled all our endeavours.

"There was a general feeling amongst all who were set to investigate the cause of the failure of the new Department that it was being run in a narrow spirit of unimaginative officialism, and that its limbs were bound in a tangle of red tape which kept it from getting ahead with its job. Constant efforts were made by me and by others to infuse a new spirit into the Department by the introduction of men of more suitable type into the work, especially on the publicity side. Mr. Chamberlain regarded these suggestions as involving an aspersion on the men he had chosen for the purpose—all able men for other tasks. He stubbornly resisted every proposal made to him for improving and strengthening the Department in certain directions where it was patently deficient.

"The machinery which Mr. Chamberlain created showed itself incompetent to deal with even volunteer recruits, and certainly too unreliable to be entrusted with the administration of dictatorial powers. Possibly the task would have been beyond any man's ability. It called for great breadth and boldness of conception, a remorseless energy and

thoroughness of execution, and for the exercise of supreme tact in dealing with other Departments, notably the recruiting machinery and the Ministries of Labour, Munitions, Agriculture, and Trade in order to avert friction, jealousies and the stranglehold of red tape. We needed in short a man of exceptional gifts. A man may possess very considerable ability without qualifying for that definition. Mr. Neville Chamberlain is a man of rigid competency. Such men have their uses in conventional times or in conventional positions, and are indispensable for filling subordinate posts at all times. But they are lost in an emergency or in creative tasks at any time."

History has dealt more swiftly than is its wont, but with its own favourite irony, with Mr. Lloyd George's judgment of Mr. Chamberlain's capacity in an emergency. With regard to the rest, it is perhaps true to say that Mr. Chamberlain's methods at that time were not such as to enable him to grasp the whole breadth and range of the project entrusted to him. Especially is it true to say that his comprehension of publicity was not such as to assist in the difficult task of popularizing the new scheme. But, when full weight has been given to Mr. Lloyd George's criticism the question still remains how far any personal qualities or action of Mr. Chamberlain could have affected the issue. Even granted the possession of every quality that Mr. Lloyd George could desire—the inherent shortcomings of the scheme, and the difficulties consequently attendant upon it, remained. The fact was that, in the hasty improvisation of the scheme, the Cabinet had given Mr. Chamberlain a high-sounding office in conditions in which it was almost impossible to make it function. Or, in the crisp metaphor employed by a Birmingham citizen at that time, "Mr. Chamberlain

has been made a present of a brand-new motor-car, and forbidden to use any petrol."

Mr. Chamberlain returned to Birmingham and in the autumn resumed his municipal work, now more than ever dominated by the exigencies of war. During the last twelve months of the War he shared as an ordinary citizen, but as no more, the fluctuating anxieties of those dark and dangerous hours. He was no longer Lord Mayor of Birmingham, and at the end of his brief hour of national importance had sunk again into the obscurity of being simply Austen Chamberlain's younger brother. It was a twelve months in which the figure of Mr. Lloyd George loomed ever larger in the consciousness of this people and of the whole world, and became a symbol of the sustained energy and the triumphant indestructibility of the British people in time of conflict. At such a time any comparisons between the two men might well have seemed otiose and absurd. But the race is not always to the swift, especially if it be a long one. The longer the race, the less decisive is a flying start, and a false start the less irretrievable.

COALITION M.P.: MR. CHAMBERLAIN
AND MR. LLOYD GEORGE

THE end of 1918, the Year of Victory, found Great Britain at once inspired and exhausted, reckless and inured to suffering. The material hardships suffered, the severance of ancient ways, and the fusion in a common crucible of standards and manners, customs and ideas, afforded tangible evidence of how arduous and how elusive was to be the path which could lead from a victorious war into the haven of a successful and enduring peace. It was clear then, and it is clearer now, that the finding of that path, and the leading of this people along it would tax the resources and strain the talents of the wisest and most effective statesmanship. What sort of a success the statesmanship of those days made of it is a matter that each can judge in the light of the knowledge of the history of the last twenty years. There is this much to be said in extenuation: the political methods necessary to the waging of war are rarely those best suited to the initial period of peace; and the headlong rush from the hills of sacrifice to the valleys of cynicism and opportunism is made more easily than the steady descent on to the broad tableland of sustained and unexciting effort.

The guide to peace was to be Mr. Lloyd George. There could be no question of that. His prestige stood at its highest point, and it had been recognized during the latter part of the War that he had exercised a personal control of policy seldom if ever

accorded to a British Prime Minister. In the interest of the successful prosecution of the War the great Liberal Democrat of pre-War days had transformed the reality of the Government very far in the direction of Dictatorship. The War was ended, but not Mr. Lloyd George's belief in the beneficence of his own paramount influence upon the nation's policy. But of what sort of Government should Mr. Lloyd George be the head? The Coalition had been introduced to meet War-time needs, and there were many who felt that the frank statement of the issues of peace could best be met by a reversion to the Party system which defines the normal differences in political ideology. Mr. Lloyd George was not one of these. He took the view that the instrument of Coalition which had served him well in achieving victory was the most likely to serve successfully the interests of peace. There was this logic in his proposition, that in December 1918 the Treaty of Peace had yet to be entered into; and it might well be thought that the Government which had been responsible for victory should if possible be responsible for peace. It may be in fact that a more equally divided House of Commons and a more spirited Opposition in Parliament would have been able to induce a better Peace Treaty than that which we now know as the Treaty of Versailles. Be that as it may, Mr. Lloyd George decided that it would be best for the Coalition Government to go to the polls as representing a single group, and his colleagues, with the exception of some of the Labour Members, acquiesced in that decision. Since the maximum duration of a Parliament in normal times had already been considerably exceeded, and since the Coalition Government as such held no mandate from the electorate, it was of course proper to hold a prompt General Election. It was also extremely likely that an imme-

diatc Election would result in an overwhelming majority for the Coalition. An immediate Election was decided upon, and Parliament was dissolved to that end.

The Election of December 1918 was unique in more than one respect. It was the first Election in which women exercised the suffrage. It also brought to an end a Parliament which had lasted for eight years, a longer period than had obtained for over a century. The length of the last Parliament had as a consequence the decision of many Members not to seek re-election. Among these was the Member for the Ladywood Division of Birmingham. The Conservatives of Ladywood decided to offer the candidature to Mr. Chamberlain. In the country as a whole he was regarded as a failure on account of the ill-success which had attended his Directorate of National Service. Outside Birmingham therefore he might at this time have found some difficulty in getting a seat; but Birmingham, remembering the family tradition and his own services during the period of his mayoralty and the preceding years, did not allow its loyalty to be shaken by the view then current as to his administrative capacity. In being offered Ladywood however he was not getting a safe Conservative seat such as his brother had in West Birmingham. Ladywood lies in the industrial centre of the city of Birmingham and contains an almost exclusive working-class population. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the old days it had been a Radical centre. But the factor of incalculability, which should have been so strong by reason of the feminine electorate and the long duration of the late Parliament, was almost eliminated by the great prestige attaching to the Coalition on account of the victorious conclusion of the War. This was the governing factor of the Election, and it operated as

much in Ladywood as elsewhere. Mr. Chamberlain, never in the first flight of orators, has grown much both in eloquence and humanity since those days. But in 1918 his manner of speaking was dry, precise, and statistical: it was the method of speech of the committee-room or the council chamber rather than that of the public platform. Whereas the fact of his victory, therefore, was no doubt due to the popular sentiments in favour of the Coalition, the size of his majority is no doubt to be ascribed to his own prestige and to the popularity which had attached to him and his wife during the period of mayoralty, and to the assiduity with which they set themselves to cultivate the new constituents. Mr. Chamberlain's majority was actually in the neighbourhood of 7,000 (the exact figure was 6,833) a record for Ladywood at that time, and undoubtedly a substantial majority for that particular seat. With this good beginning behind him Mr. Chamberlain, like his father and brother before him, went to Westminster as one of the Members for Birmingham.

His position at Westminster however was vastly different from that of his brother. Mr. Chamberlain was an ordinary back-bench supporter of the Government, and consequently of considerably less importance than in 1917 when, without being a Member of Parliament, he had been Director of National Service. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, on the other hand, had, after a brief period of retirement on a now forgotten issue, been a Member of the small War-time Cabinet. In the new Parliament he was Chancellor of the Exchequer and, after Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Lloyd George himself, perhaps the most influential member of the Government. In spite of this, it had been Mr. Austen Chamberlain's original desire to end the Coalition with the termination of the War, which had brought it into existence. He

has himself narrated in his book *Down the Years* that he was not particularly enthusiastic at the offer of office, and was if anything less enthusiastic about the prolongation into peace-time of the Coalition. But, when once he had accepted and, together with Mr. Bonar Law, the then Leader of the Conservative Party, had agreed to continue to serve under Mr. Lloyd George, the Coalition had no more devoted adherent than Mr. Austen Chamberlain, whose loyalty and integrity in a lifetime of politics were never once called in question.

What of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's inner feelings with regard to the Coalition Government? At first he was naturally inclined to view it with sympathy and to expect much of it. Not having been a pre-War politician, he had not known the dubious delights of the violent party controversies of those times, and was thus exempt from those nostalgic and frustrated longings which beset many politicians of the Coalition era. He was content with a system which strove for the merging of Party differences in the interest of the common good. As a business man himself he was also naturally sympathetic to the ideal fashionable at that time of Government by business men, and Mr. Lloyd George has likened his own supporters in that Parliament to the Associated Chambers of Commerce.

In fact Mr. Chamberlain would no doubt ordinarily find himself more in sympathy with the Associated Chambers of Commerce than would Mr. Lloyd George. For better or for worse the Coalition Parliament of 1918-22 was Mr. Lloyd George's instrument. The business principles on which the Government was alleged to work were soon perceived not to be the business principles of Mr. Chamberlain. His view of business principles comprised a conviction of the necessity of husbanding resources, and of planning

outlay so as to yield the best return for the most reasonable expenditure. The War however had both necessitated and excused some variation, if not abandonment, of these elementary principles. But with the conclusion of war the return to them was imperative if the economics of peace were to be laid on a satisfactory basis. The Coalition was never able to return wholeheartedly to these principles, for it was deeply infected with the virus of "bold conceptions" and lavish expenditure. The disinclination of the Government for economy and retrenchment was evidenced in many spheres. A small but significant example was the delay in the winding up of some of the temporary departments created to meet war-time requirements. A more important illustration became apparent in the Coalition's policy with regard to the pressing problem of housing, which was so framed as to enjoin economy on none, and to look upon the State resources as an inexhaustible well for the subsidizing of schemes. It was not long before the nation became uneasy at the increasing symptoms of Governmental indifference to sound and economical administration. The Northcliffe Press joined issue on this point, and trained its powerful artillery upon the Coalition. Soon "anti-waste" candidates were appearing at by-elections and defeating the Government nominees.

All this anxiety found a natural echo in Mr. Chamberlain's heart. The shortcomings of Government policy on these various matters was the more easily apparent to Mr. Chamberlain since he never succumbed to the spell of the "dynamic force" which exercised so irresistible an attraction over so many Conservative Members of Parliament and such a large proportion of the general public in the immediate post-War years. There has in fact never

been any degree of intimacy or sympathy between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George. The reason for this goes deeper than the unfortunate episode of the Directorate of National Service. It goes deeper too than the resentment which Mr. Chamberlain, as a loyal and admiring son of a remarkable father, felt at the ferocious onslaughts made upon Joseph Chamberlain by Mr. Lloyd George at the time of the Boer War. It goes right down to the depths of things; down to the fundamental antipathetic nature of the two men—the passionate, colourful, impatient, brilliant Celt, and the reserved, precise, plain-spoken, tenacious Englishman. It is said that opposites attract; but there are differences of temperament, which dictate differences of political method so complete and so radical, that they almost forbid the possibility of collaboration or due comprehension. The differences between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George extend from their temperaments to their methods, their creeds, and their objectives. To Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Chamberlain is a second-rate man, frostbound within the cold limits of his bureaucratic nature. To Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Lloyd George is a stormy petrel, or a child enraptured by the bright colours of his political imaginings, and careless of the inflammable material of which they are composed. The nature of the one forbids a proper comprehension of the qualities of the other. Mr. Lloyd George is not quick to revise his judgment of men. Just as Mr. Baldwin always remained for him the dull individual who contributed so rarely to the Cabinet discussions of the Coalition, so Mr. Chamberlain has remained the executive whom he dismissed for incompetence in 1917. Since then there have been ups and downs for both men; but through them all the antipathy has remained, as an interesting and not unimportant undercurrent of British

politics, coming every now and again to the surface in a brief sparkle of brisk exchanges.

But in the immediate post-War years this, and much else, lay in the unanticipated future. At that time Mr. Lloyd George had neither leisure nor reason to regard the activities of Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, had both leisure and reason to regard the activities of the Head of the Government; and no doubt not all those activities met with his unqualified approval. It would be wrong, however, to represent Mr. Chamberlain as a critic, still less as a rebel against, the Coalition Government. During the three and a half years for which the Coalition Government held sway in peace time the process of disaffection grew steadily among Conservative Members; and Mr. Chamberlain was no exception to this general rule. There were however two allied factors which militated against the process taking, in his case, an extreme or unduly rapid form. The first of these factors was the position of his brother in the Government: the second was that Mr. Chamberlain was not at this time viewed, nor did he regard himself, as an authority on broad general principles of policy. He had not been brought up as a politician and had received no such conscious introduction to the political scene as had been given to his brother, for whom Joseph Chamberlain, as we have seen, had chosen the role of politician. Mr. Chamberlain's own interest in politics, like that of his father, derived from the more specialized field of local government. From this it was destined to expand in the same way as his father's interests had expanded before him. But this time was not yet. For the present he viewed his brother as the authority on general policy and confined himself in the main to matters of which he had more expert knowledge.

In this connection it would perhaps be gratifying

for a biographer of Mr. Chamberlain to be able to show that right from the start he expressed disquietude about the terms of that Treaty of Versailles, to which he was subsequently to attribute in considerable measure the problems with which he was called upon to deal. It would be gratifying; but it would not be strictly correct. One famous economist expressed to the world his view of the unsatisfactory nature of the economic aspect of the Peace Treaties: an undergraduate, who was also to become a distinguished economist, had his rooms in college wrecked for attaching his signature to a memorandum protesting against the terms of the Treaty, and subsequently looked back upon the occasion as one of his proudest memories. But such misgivings as Mr. Chamberlain may have had he kept to himself; or, it is truer to say, that his attitude to the Treaty was a later revelation. In 1919, like many others, he attached importance to the fact that there were a host of experts, presumably much better qualified than himself, at work upon the matter. Here again he was fairly typical of that generation of Conservative politicians, most of whom arrived at the conclusion that there were defects in the Treaty rather by observation of the subsequent trend of events than by *a priori* reasoning.

But his own active interest in politics was still that of a specialist, and concentrated naturally for the most part upon those matters which had commanded his principal attention when he served upon the Birmingham Council. Chief of these were Health and Housing, to which a large proportion of his speeches were devoted. There were also, of course, subjects of special interest to certain sections of his constituents, such as War Pensions, and to these he devoted a considerable amount of attention, but mainly in connection with Birmingham. The

sphere of specialized activity in which from the National point of view he was most prominently identified was the useful, if unexciting one, of Waterways. This had been a special interest in the old pre-War days in Birmingham, even before his membership of the City Council, when amongst other things he had been interested in an abortive scheme to link up Birmingham with Bristol by canal. Now, as a Member of Parliament, he had greater scope for this interest, and wrote and spoke extensively, and with some authority upon the subject. In 1921 this interest was recognized by his appointment to the chairmanship of the Committee on Inland Waterways which constituted his first public national appointment since he had ceased to be Director of National Service four years previously.

But in 1921 political events of more interest to the world at large were happening in connection with the Chamberlain family. Until that year Mr. Austen Chamberlain had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Mr. Bonar Law as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Conservative Party. In 1921, however, ill-health compelled Law's resignation, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain surrendered the Exchequer to Sir Robert Horne, who had been associated with Mr. Neville Chamberlain in the Department of National Service, in order to succeed Mr. Bonar Law in his office and in the Leadership of the Conservative Party. By so doing Mr. Austen Chamberlain became second in command of the Coalition. He also became entitled by right of that position to the reversion of the Leadership of the Coalition. This, however, was an asset of doubtful and diminishing value, since Mr. Lloyd George's health was a good deal more robust than the chances of survival of the Coalition; for by this time the Leadership of Mr. Lloyd George had lost its magic and Conservative disaffection was steadily increasing.

The position of his brother made Mr. Chamberlain's own position one of some delicacy. It would scarcely have been possible, even if he had so desired, for him to have played a part in the movement for dissociation from the Coalition, which was gathering strength in the Conservative Party. At the end of 1921 an additional cause of dissatisfaction among Conservatives was forthcoming in the signing of the Irish Treaty, which many of them considered to be a violation of the spirit of their undertakings to Ulster. The disputes which ensued on account of this and other matters in the early months of 1922 made it apparent that the future of the Coalition was speculative. It succeeded however in lasting through the summer until the prospects of the country being involved in a war with Turkey on account of the Chanak episode less than four years after the conclusion of the War to end War, was more than the majority of rank-and-file Conservatives could stand. They had grown weary of the Coalition, and lacked confidence in its policy and in the guidance of its Leader. In this they were reflecting the attitude of the bulk of their fellow countrymen who had come to the same conclusion. But before the country could be asked to give judgment as to the future governance of the country, it was necessary for the Conservative Party to retire from the Coalition. The decision to retire from the Coalition was arrived at by the famous Carlton Club Meeting, held in October 1922. At this meeting the Coalition Conservatives endeavoured to defend their position, but the sense of the meeting ran strongly against them. The ring-leaders of the revolt against the Coalition and Mr. Lloyd George were Mr. Bonar Law, former Leader of the Party and at that time temporarily better in health, and Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who had been President of the Board of Trade for about a year but was at that time very little known to the public at

large. It was observed, however, that this unfamiliar political figure showed great skill in his management of the Carlton Club Meeting, and it was in some degree due to his skill in striking the right note that the majority in favour of breaking up the Coalition was substantial.

The Carlton Club Meeting was a decisive event both in post-War political history and in the fortunes of the Chamberlain family. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who could in all probability have continued in the Leadership of the Conservative Party if he had cared to associate himself with the revolt, preferred, as one would expect of him, to go down with the ship of which he had been second in command. The result was that the Leadership of the Conservative Party, and with it the reversion to the Premiership in the probable event of a successful General Election passed back again from Mr. Austen Chamberlain to Mr. Bonar Law. In fact Mr. Bonar Law died before Mr. Austen Chamberlain's official reconciliation with the Conservative Party, and so in consequence another and younger man was chosen for the succession, and the Leadership passed from Mr. Austen Chamberlain for ever.

The result of the Carlton Club Meeting therefore, and of the events arising out of it, was to deprive the second Chamberlain, whom public opinion had marked out for the Premiership, of his chance of holding that high office. But it was to bring this much compensation: it opened the pathway to the Premiership for the third member of the family, who had been destined for a business life and was as yet wholly unassociated in the public mind with the prospect of high political office.

In October of 1922 it would, however, have required the eye of faith to discern any such eventuality in the happenings of that month. Mr. Chamber-

lain had taken no part in the overthrow of the Coalition, and had therefore no special claims upon the prizes of victory. Indeed his name was necessarily associated with the Coalition, of which his brother had been so prominent a Member. But, for all that, Mr. Chamberlain's relief at the end of a system of Government which could not command his whole-hearted enthusiasm, was tempered only by personal regret at the seeming eclipse of his brother's hopes. With this exception, he was able to face the electorate in October with a glad heart. He was again returned for Ladywood—albeit with a considerably reduced majority—but this time went to meet a Parliament at Westminster very different from that which had preceded it.

POLITICAL EXPRESS

THE administration formed by Mr. Bonar Law was the first Conservative Ministry to hold office since Mr. Balfour's Government had been swept away by the great Liberal victory of 1906. The brilliant figures of the Coalition, such as Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, figures with whom the public had been familiar for a generation and more of political life, were necessarily excluded from the new Government. Lord Birkenhead indeed scathingly referred to Mr. Bonar Law's Ministry as being composed of "second-class brains." Others referred to it as "the Duke's Government." For was not the Colonial Secretary the Duke of Devonshire, and was not the Foreign Secretary the Marquess Curzon? And was not the Secretary for War the Earl of Derby, and the Secretary for India the Viscount Peel, and was not the Lord President of the Council the Marquess of Salisbury? And was not the Under-Secretary for Air the Duke of Sutherland, and was not the Under-Secretary for India the Earl Winterton, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health the Earl Onslow, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture the Earl of Ancaster, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade the Viscount Wolmer, and to the Board of Education the Lord Eustace Percy? And the names of these and others of their colleagues, are they not written in the *Book of Burke* and the *Book of Debrett*?

To many it seemed like a return to the good old times, almost beyond the memory of man. But Mr. Bonar Law, who was from Glasgow, and Mr. Baldwin, who was from Dudley by way of Bewdley, were shrewd enough to realize that you cannot play a hand consisting solely of court cards. It is desirable to have some trumps which, even if less picturesque, are sometimes more efficacious. They looked around therefore for sound back-benchers whom they could promote to the ministerial ranks and amongst others their eye fell upon Neville Chamberlain. Why not promote him? It was true that in a sense he had little enough claim upon them. His once powerful brother had gone out into the wilderness in loyalty to the Coalition, to the overthrow of which they owed their position. At fifty-three years of age he had sat for less than four years in Parliament, and had made no great mark there in debate or in contribution to the general policy: might not the appointment of such a man create jealousy? Then again, though known in Birmingham for his practical achievements there, he was still associated in the country as a whole principally with the failure of National Service in 1917.

But there were other considerations. Now that Austen Chamberlain was gone, would it not be desirable to have the name Chamberlain figure in a Conservative Government? It would certainly make a good impression in Birmingham, which might otherwise feel a little sore at the exclusion of their leader. And would not the fact that he had not been a specialist in politics prove perhaps a better and more suitable quality for the sort of office they had in mind for him? And as to jealousy, perhaps the appointment of a middle-aged man of business and municipal experience would be less calculated to provoke jealousy among political aspirants than the appoint-

ment of one of more customary qualifications. And, now that Mr. Lloyd George was gone, there was a tendency to take a more charitable view of Mr. Chamberlain's tenure of office at the Department of National Service. After all Mr. Baldwin had not found himself entirely comfortable with the "dynamic force" of Mr. Lloyd George's methods. It was no longer conclusive evidence against the efficiency of Mr. Chamberlain that he had failed to win the approval of the great Coalition idol, upon whose feet of clay the new Party Leaders had found it necessary to tread so sharply. Taken all in all, it appeared that Mr. Chamberlain was well suited for the office they had in mind. He was offered, and readily accepted, the office of Postmaster-General.

The achievement of this post did not, of course, give Mr. Chamberlain Cabinet rank. In Great Britain, it has to be remembered, there is the outer body known as the Ministry of Government, which consists of about fifty persons, and the inner body within the Ministry, known as the Cabinet and generally consisting of about twenty persons. It is the Cabinet which is responsible for the formulation of national policy. The wider body of non-Cabinet Ministers are either the second in command to Cabinet Ministers in their Departments, or are heads of Departments which do not carry Cabinet rank. Mr. Chamberlain at the Post Office belonged to the latter category. In both cases the scope of such ministerial office is departmental and not general in character. But, while appreciating the limitations of Mr. Chamberlain's new appointment, it represented a most rapid promotion for a man of his small Parliamentary experience, the more so as he had by-passed the normal first stage of junior ministerial office, and had arrived at the first bound at the control of a Department. It was natural that the appointment

should cause a measure of surprise in the public mind. Two considerations however diminished the amount of surprise, that might otherwise have been felt by a public which still knew Mr. Chamberlain primarily in the light of the National Service episode of 1917. Owing to the length of time which had elapsed since there had last been a purely Conservative Government in office there were necessarily a number of appointments to office of men virtually unknown to the general public. Secondly, Mr. Chamberlain bore a name which had been continuously in the foreground of the political scene for half a century.

The appointment was decisive in the life of Mr. Chamberlain. For the first twenty years of his adult life he had been occupied mainly in business. For the next ten years business had to share first place in his interests with municipal life and municipal politics in the city of Birmingham. The Directorate of National Service, which had brought him for the first time under the notice of a wider public, had been a short-lived and unhappy episode. Then had followed three and a half years of Parliamentary life, which had nevertheless been a halting between two phases of existence; between business and local interests in Birmingham, and Parliament and national interests in Westminster. Had Mr. Chamberlain not been included in Mr. Bonar Law's team, when already in his fifty-fourth year, he might well have been considered too old subsequently for a first entry into the Ministry. In such a case, while continuing no doubt as a private member of the Conservative back benches, he would have had his business interests, his constituency pre-occupations, and the bulk of his associations all in Birmingham. In such a case, the real centre of his life would have remained in Birmingham. But his appointment,

coming when it did, changed all that. He continued to maintain close and intimate contact with Birmingham; no Chamberlain would do otherwise. But, in October 1922, the focus of his life shifted: from then on, like Austen Chamberlain, his life centred in London and belonged to the nation. Mr. Chamberlain showed an awareness of this new orientation of his life. While still maintaining his house in Birmingham, he acquired a London house in the fashionable purlieus of Eaton Square—where another Birmingham Parliamentarian Mr. Leo Amery, also resides—and there with Mrs. Chamberlain and the two children, took up his normal residence. At the same time he set about severing business contacts of long standing by resigning his position on the Board of Directors of the Birmingham Small Arms Company, the Daimler Company and Elliot's Metal Company. And thus, business man turned politician, he was ready to embark on the new way of life.

The new way of life might have opened with a fascinating experiment for a keen and vigorous administrator, for the Post Office had at that time new and expanding activities within the scope of its jurisdiction. There had been a tendency to view this office as a stepping-stone to higher things rather than as a position of intrinsic administrative interest. How erroneous was this conception was clearly evidenced by the success subsequently made of this Department in the National Government by Sir Kingsley Wood, who had started his ministerial career as junior to Mr. Chamberlain at the Ministry of Health, and became the first Postmaster-General to hold Cabinet rank. Nor is there any doubt that Mr. Chamberlain could, with his talent and taste for administration, have made a success of his Department. Certainly its potentialities interested him, for in those days wireless and broadcasting were still in

their comparative infancy; and any Postmaster-General who could have held office continuously for fifteen years or so from that time would have had the rare experience of guiding the evolution of the greatest entertainment and propaganda force of modern times. In those early days there were many decisions to be made as to the manner and substance of transmission, the difficulties of reception, the making and licensing of sets. Not that the problems of wireless by any means monopolized the attention of the Department at its head. People at that time were looking back and demanding a return to the good old days of the penny post interrupted by the War; people were looking forward too, and demanding an improvement in the telephone service. The latter objective has perhaps to some extent been realized; but the former, alas, has remained a pious aspiration and the interruption appears to be permanent.

But these problems were not for Mr. Chamberlain, for his tenure of office as Postmaster-General proved to be only temporary. After less than three months, he was transferred to the sinecure office of Paymaster-General in the place of Sir J. Tudor. The brief space of time spent by Mr. Chamberlain at the Post Office had been too short for him to do other than acquaint himself with the problems of his Department and discharge his routine duties. There had not been time for him to impress the stamp of his own personality upon the Department, or to formulate a line of policy. But, if his career as Postmaster-General was short, his career as Paymaster-General was still shorter. This was natural, since it was an office of no very precisely defined Departmental duties, and incidentally carried no salary. The position is one in which a Minister can make himself generally useful, and Mr. Chamberlain was able to make a certain

number of speeches in the country. In one of these, made at Cambridge three weeks after his appointment as Paymaster-General, he referred to the dangerous situation created by the French occupation of the Ruhr Valley. The French occupation of the Ruhr signaled the last real attempt on the part of the French to impose the fulfilment of the Treaty of Versailles. British opinion, of which Mr. Chamberlain was representative, had already swung away from the immediate post-War mood of exacting the uttermost farthing. The policy of co-operation was at hand, and was shortly to give fair promise of fulfilment as a result of the efforts of Mr. Austen Chamberlain and M. Briand in collaboration with the statesmen of Republican Germany. But foreign affairs as such were so far not very much in Mr. Chamberlain's line. He was content to leave these in the expert hands of his brother, who was in 1924 to return to the Conservative Cabinet as Mr. Baldwin's Foreign Secretary. More in his line of country was the article on the new Imperialism which he wrote for publication in a review at this time.

In January 1923, he had been appointed to one of the oldest of the offices of State, for the Paymaster-General was a functionary who went back to the time of the Restoration. Two months later he was appointed to one of the newest of the ministries. After the War the Local Government Board had been renamed with the more imaginative and sympathetic title of Ministry of Health. This office had been held during the period of the Coalition successively by Dr. Addison and Sir Alfred Mond, subsequently Lord Melchett. Both these men were in 1922 Liberals, though Lord Melchett ultimately became a Conservative and Dr. Addison a Socialist. On the formation of the Bonar Law Government, therefore, it was necessary for the Prime Minister to find a new

Minister of Health. The person selected was Sir Arthur Griffiths-Boscawen, who was a former Minister of Agriculture in the Coalition Ministry. His policy and views, however, were distasteful to a powerful section of the Press, and his defeat in two reasonably "safe" Conservative constituencies made it apparent that the new Minister could not clear the preliminary hurdle of finding a seat in Parliament.

It became necessary therefore to say farewell to Sir Arthur as Minister and to find a new Minister of Health. Mr. Chamberlain, who was known as an authority on housing with considerable municipal experience, was a fairly obvious choice, especially as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry, Lord Onslow, was a peer. Mr. Chamberlain's appointment was the more clearly indicated, as he was at that time in what was obviously for his case a temporary position. Indeed his transference from the Post Office to the position of Paymaster-General was no doubt influenced by the desire to be ready against the contingency of having to find a new Minister of Health.

This was undoubtedly an appointment after Mr. Chamberlain's own heart, for the Department included, and was mainly concerned with those subjects, of the housing and health of the people, which had first awakened his interest in politics and to which he had been loyal during the years of his municipal administration in Birmingham and as a back-bench Member of Parliament. These were matters in which he was already versed, and on which he had views founded on personal experience and research. His own interest in the work, however, and his natural desire to fill the office did not blind him to the fact that he had found much to criticize in the previous administration of the Ministry. He gave

the whole matter of his acceptance the most careful, not to say anxious, consideration in the light of his own views and the present Government proposals. Before accepting the office he obtained from the Prime Minister an assurance that he would have time to make a minute examination of the Cabinet proposals with regard to housing before it became necessary for him to introduce a measure into the House of Commons. Thus satisfied that he would be able personally to influence the character of the proposals, and that he would not necessarily be compelled to sponsor and to champion a whole programme of proposals worked out by a Cabinet of which he had not been a member, he accepted his new position, and with it earned promotion to Cabinet rank.

The question of the satisfactory housing of the people—of the finding of those homes for heroes, of which so much had been heard—had been unceasingly prominent since the War, and public opinion rightly attached great importance to the personality of the Minister of Health. Mr. Chamberlain's appointment was undoubtedly popular with the public and with the Press which represents its views. The *Birmingham Post* stated, that "Neville Chamberlain's appointment as Minister of Health has been so overwhelmingly demanded by Parliamentary as well as by public opinion that its official announcement will create no surprise," and went on to say that "old time politicians are recalling to-night, as a good omen for the new Minister of Health, that the better housing of the people has long been an article of the Chamberlain faith." The *Birmingham Post* might perhaps be suspected of partiality, but *The Times* also gave the appointment its approval, and among the Sunday papers the *Weekly Dispatch* and the *Observer* gave it its blessing. Interesting too was the comparatively good Press which the appointment received from the

Radical papers, the *Daily News* hailing him as a housing reformer, and the *Star* commenting on his good start. The *Westminster Gazette* credited him with "actual experience and a progressive mind, if a somewhat cold and autocratic manner." There was naturally a certain amount of reference back to the old National Service episode. There was however very little reflection upon his actual competence in connection therewith. The severest criticism on that point was merely that he had retained that position instead of resigning as soon as it appeared that he could not get his own way. Against this there was a considerable volume of opinion that he had been badly treated in the whole affair.

Amid this atmosphere of general good-will and approbation, Mr. Chamberlain settled down in the spring of 1923 to work upon the Housing Question. As a Member of the Cabinet, he was of course now entitled to a voice in general policy, but at that time it is no exaggeration to say that the Housing Question stood right in the forefront of public policy. For some months therefore we find Mr. Chamberlain engrossed in the urgent business of re-housing the nation. His work for housing comes under review in the next chapter: it was his main occupation during the 1920's and perhaps his principal practical contribution to human happiness and welfare until his activities recently achieved a more universal significance. His original tenure of office at the Ministry of Health was not destined to be of long duration, though it was long enough for him to pilot through the House of Commons and to place upon the Statute Book the Housing Act of 1923, popularly known as the Chamberlain Act. During the Parliamentary recess in the summer of that year he again received ministerial promotion and finished a year of almost unprecedented political advancement.

When Mr. Bonar Law's retirement in May of 1923 brought the Premiership to Mr. Baldwin, no new appointment was made to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Mr. Baldwin at first carried on this office with advice from Mr. Reginald McKenna. The idea was that Mr. McKenna should become Chancellor of the Exchequer at a suitable time. Actually Mr. McKenna was never appointed, for he was advised for reasons of health against undertaking the labours attached to that office. In addition to the question of Mr. McKenna's suitability for appointment to high office in a Conservative administration—for Mr. McKenna's political antecedents were Liberal—latterly, in the words of a contemporary, he had "fallen by the wayside, where the die-hards rubbed salt, and the Liberals vinegar, into his wounds." Mr. McKenna, therefore, not being available, who else was there? Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer twenty years previously, not having made his full peace with the Party, the obvious choice was his brother, who was rapidly coming to be viewed as the Government's Admirable Crichton. On the 28th of August the appointment was announced, and Mr. Chamberlain, who in the previous August had been a back-bench private Member of Parliament out of favour with his then Leader, Mr. Lloyd George, had achieved the second highest position in the Government. The Press on the whole accorded a good reception to his appointment, though one journal added a comment that "a few years ago, it is true, Mr. Neville Chamberlain would have seemed impossible—he was little more than Mr. Austen's brother." The Liberal paper the *Nation* instanced the relative positions of the two brothers as a curious example of the vicissitudes of life.

At the time of the appointment Mr. and Mrs.

Chamberlain were staying at Harrogate, where Mr. Chamberlain was taking a well-earned rest after his exacting labours on the housing legislation of the previous Parliamentary session. His mind, however, at once began to visualize the problems before him. What seemed to stand out was the necessity, five years after the conclusion of war, of getting back to normal conditions of employment. That he considered to be the chief and really serious problem which lay before him and the Government generally. This problem he realized to be irrevocably bound up with the European situation, and therefore he looked forward to the possibility of finding a means of working in harmony with France, Italy, and Belgium to obtain a final settlement both of Reparations and of inter-allied debts. At the same time, while welcoming the opportunity to add his quota to these great problems, he could not but feel some regret at leaving the work on which he was engaged at the Ministry of Health. This was tempered, however, with the knowledge that he had been able to contribute to a revival of private enterprise and that a large number of houses had been placed under construction.

But the mind of the country—or that substantial portion of it which had the doubtful privilege of a taxable income—was in those seemingly far-off days of 1922 concerned with the possibility of a reduction in taxation. Could the new Chancellor supply this? Consultation with his experts and an investigation of existing revenue and the burdens that the State had to bear convinced the new Chancellor that he could not. Being Mr. Chamberlain, he lost no time in saying so. Early in October he made it clear that the financial position of the country was not such as to justify any remission of taxation. There came a wave of natural disappointment through the

country, which found a ready reflection in the Press.

It was not for this reason, however, that Mr. Chamberlain failed to survive long enough as Chancellor of the Exchequer to introduce a Budget. (The British financial year is reckoned from April to April, and the Budget is always introduced in that month.) The reason lay in the desire of the Cabinet to find some effective method of promoting an industrial revival and the return to normal conditions of employment which depended on it. From the days of Joseph Chamberlain the Conservative Party had been mainly Protectionist; but in spite of the vigorous efforts of the Tariff Reform League and certain prominent publicists, the Country still maintained its traditional attachment to Free Trade. Mr. Baldwin and his Cabinet came to the conclusion that the adoption of Protection was essential to the stabilizing and improvement of the industrial structure of the Country. There is no doubt that they formed a correct view: but unfortunately there were difficulties in practice. Mr. Bonar Law had given a pledge not to introduce any fundamental economic change such as this during the lifetime of that Parliament. Mr. Baldwin's Government as successor to Mr. Bonar Law's was of course bound by this pledge. If Protection was to be introduced, therefore, there must be a General Election. On the other hand, until the country was educated in the principles of Protection, there was little likelihood of the Conservative Party being successful in an appeal to the country on this issue. What Mr. Baldwin should have done was to have prepared the ground by an intensive campaign in favour of Protection in the Press and on the platform, and to have had his General Election at the height of the campaign. These tactics might have been crowned with success;

but Mr. Baldwin preferred the more precipitate course. Parliament was dissolved in December, and an immediate appeal made to the Electorate on the issue of Protection.

Mr. Chamberlain's advice had not been responsible for this precipitate appeal. On the other hand he would hardly have been his father's son if his enthusiasm had not been aroused by a contest for Protection. He went to his constituency at Ladywood fortified not only by his own enthusiasm, but by the knowledge that in Birmingham at any rate the cause of Protection had been more vigorously evangelized and more warmly received than perhaps in any other part of the country. In addition to the Chamberlain influence there had been much vigorous work put in by the Tariff Reform League under the local leadership of Mr. Amery and Mr. (later Sir) Patrick Hannon. It was as well that this was so, for the industrial division of Ladywood was being subjected to the increasing pressure of strong Socialist attack. Mr. Chamberlain's election slogans show that his case was based on the appeal of Protection in an industrial constituency. Chief among them were: "FREE TRADE AND THE EMPTY FACTORY." "PROTECTION OF HOME MARKETS." "MAKE THE FOREIGNER PAY." "BRITISH WORK FOR BRITISH WORKMEN." In his Election Address Mr. Chamberlain gave expression to what had long been in his mind when he said that "the dominant feature of the situation is the continued prevalence of unemployment which for three successive winters has hung over this country like a nightmare and even now shows little sign of improvement." After describing the efforts made by way of stimulation of public works and so on, Mr. Chamberlain went on to declare that such things could not provide a permanent solution. "The loss of our foreign markets

calls for the raising of foreign tariffs, and the disorganization of Europe cannot be made good for many years to come. We must create new markets to replace them, and these new markets can be found among our own kindred in the Dominions and Colonies overseas." Such was his diagnosis of the situation, a diagnosis similar to that which his father had put forward twenty years before. Nine years later he was to have the satisfaction of administering the treatment of Imperial Protection, which the diagnosis demanded.

But this lay in the future. In 1923, the election on the Protection issue went badly for the Conservative Party. Though Mr. Chamberlain succeeded in holding Ladywood by a clear though not large majority, and in Birmingham only Conservatives were returned for the twelve electoral divisions, in the industrial parts of the country as a whole the old clarion cry of Free Trade was triumphant. Mr. Baldwin's tactics had been clever in this respect: by producing the policy of Protection he was able to fight the Election on an offensive instead of being forced on to the defensive, as is normally the lot of retiring Governments. The results of the Election showed, however, that the industrial population was still looking at the issue with the eye of the consumer rather than of the producer. To effect a change a longer period of political education was required. The result was that in the new Parliament the Conservative majority was gone and there was a great increase in Labour representation. No party had an absolute independent majority in the House of Commons and the balance was held by the comparatively small body of Mr. Asquith's Liberals. Mr. Asquith decided to use his votes to support Labour in office, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald accordingly succeeded Mr. Baldwin and became first

Socialist Prime Minister, while Mr. Chamberlain's place at the Exchequer was taken by Mr. Philip Snowden.

Thus began the first of the only two short breaks which have occurred in Mr. Chamberlain's administrative career since 1922. The break was to be of very short duration. Mr. Asquith no doubt hoped to use his strategical position as a means of vesting the real decisions of policy in the Liberals. The event proved his error. After ten months of alternating diffident and dangerous policies, which included the cessation of work upon the Singapore Base, Mr. Asquith found it necessary to use his votes to expel the Socialist administration from office. In November of 1924 another General Election became necessary to decide the future governance of the country. This time the Conservative Party went into the fight in considerably happier circumstances. The Socialist Government was discredited by the Campbell Prosecution and the discovery of the Zinoviev Letter. The Liberal Party, having both put the Socialist Party into office and expelled it therefrom in the same twelve months, could clearly not be expected to exercise any very consistent or constructive influence upon the country's affairs. It appeared that the Conservative Party was on the eve of a long period of Government by way of a great victory at the polls.

Though this expectation was realized as far as the Conservative Party was concerned, Mr. Chamberlain came within an ace of losing his own seat. The contest at Ladywood in 1924 was the most exciting in the whole election. The local Labour Party provided Mr. Chamberlain with a new opponent for the election. He was a young man of great wealth and social position, who had sat as Conservative Member for Harrow in the Coalition Parliament, where he had been chiefly distinguished for the

strength of his devotion to the League of Nations and to its chief British protagonist Lord Robert Cecil. From 1922 to 1924 he had continued to represent Harrow, but as an Independent. A short flirtation with Liberalism preceded the plunge into the Socialist Party, in which he quickly became distinguished for the strength of his views and the vigorous method of their expression. His name was, and still is, Oswald Mosley.

An election contest between two such personalities would have been a stimulating affair at any time. Circumstances did nothing to diminish the keenness with which the engagement was fought in 1924 because of the bitterness aroused by the Zinoviev Letter controversy and because of the zeal, characteristic of most recent converts, of Mr. Mosley. There was, too, an undercurrent of feeling, which occasionally welled up into the open, about the apparent inconsistency of the great wealth of the Mosleys with their political profession of opinion. In those days, it must be remembered, it was still the exception rather than the rule for people with large unearned incomes to profess Leftist sympathies. This feeling was characterized by the appearance one day of a paragraph in the *Sketch*, which ran: "I saw Lady Cynthia Mosley and her husband sunning themselves on the terrace of the Carlton last week. She looked lovely and wore a simple white frock and her pearls. Her husband is a prospective Labour M.P. and somehow it seemed funny to think of this when one saw Lady Cynthia stepping into a pretty good-looking car." In the end it turned out that the Carlton referred to was not the headquarters of social Conservatism, but the Carlton at Biarritz. So both sides took such comfort as they could muster from this geographical revelation.

The more serious side of the election was fought primarily on the issues of relations with Russia and of Housing, with special reference to Mr. Chamberlain's record as Minister of Health. Possibly on account of the briskness of the election Mr. Chamberlain's Election Address was a more attractive document than that of the previous year. There was a greater use of capitals and sub-headings, and Mr. Chamberlain roundly declared that "the Russian Treaty and the *Worker's Weekly* show beyond doubt that although the Labour Party have excluded Communists from membership, THEY HAVE TO DANCE TO THEIR TUNE AND OBEY THEIR COMMAND." Mr. Mosley produced a long and rather dull Election address in small print, in which he expressed the view that "with Russia a pariah nation driven into hostilities against the world, Labour's great work for Peace and Disarmament through the League of Nations at Geneva would be in danger of destruction."

Mr. Mosley tried the old tactics of a young candidate challenging a Member entrenched in position. He challenged Mr. Chamberlain to meet him in debate. Mr. Chamberlain made the accepted answer of the man in possession: he would not advertise Mr. Mosley. He would however, be glad to debate with him in the House of Commons. Mr. Mosley replied that this would not be possible as Mr. Chamberlain would not be in the House of Commons. Mr. Mosley was wrong, but only just. After three counts Mr. Chamberlain was finally returned by a margin of seventy-seven votes, and Mr. Mosley was left to seek another entrance into Parliament. It was a good victory after an exceptionally keen contest, which was uncharitably described by a Labour paper in these terms: "Ladywood would have been won but for the rain. Only hundreds of Unionist

motor-cars and the downpour of rain enabled the Unionist to retain the seat. A downpour from Heaven washed back to Westminster the lifeless body of the last of the Chamberlains—dead as mutton, running from the public debate, beaten in argument, a flood of rain carried the corpse.”

Mr. Chamberlain, then no more than recently, was not the sort of man to be upset by abuse. He was going to prove that he was very much alive. It was naturally expected by the public that when Mr. Baldwin formed his new Government after the Conservative election victory, Mr. Chamberlain would resume his old place at the Exchequer. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Baldwin had other ideas. Mr. Chamberlain was anxious to continue with his work on Housing and kindred matters, which had been interrupted just over a year previously by his appointment to the Exchequer. His desire was the keener because the size of the Conservative majority rendered it as near certain as these things can be that he would have at least four years in which to give effect to his ideas in regard to those important matters which had always lain nearest his political heart. Mr. Baldwin, for his part, was naturally anxious to close once again the ranks of the Conservative Party by the inclusion of Ministers who had been prominent in the Coalition. To Mr. Austen Chamberlain he was able to offer the Foreign Office, and to Lord Birkenhead the Secretaryship of State for India. But there was one other whom Mr. Baldwin was anxious to include, although he had left the Conservative Party twenty years before and had in November of 1924 got no further back on the road from Liberalism than an isolated halt called Independent Constitutionalism. This was Mr. Winston Churchill. To him Mr. Baldwin was anxious to offer the Exchequer; and indeed, whatever had

been Mr. Chamberlain's preference, the imagination boggles at Mr. Churchill, for all his versatility, in the role of Minister of Health. The story is—though it may well be apocryphal—that Mr. Churchill, when offered the Chancellorship, thought that: this is a £2,000 a year post in the British Government, which may or may not carry Cabinet rank according to the individual who occupies it. It is of course much less important than the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. The reference was to the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster and accepted under that impression. Be that as it may, Mr. Churchill returned to the fold as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Chamberlain to the less sought-after position of Minister of Health.

By the standards of those who measure office only by the prestige attaching to it, Mr. Chamberlain's acceptance of the junior position was interpreted in the light of a defeat for him. His ultimate succession to the Leadership, which had started to become a matter of speculation among political prophets in his appointment to the Exchequer in 1923, was thought to be relegated to a more distant possibility. To the prescient and patriotic observer the matter appeared in a different light. Such an observer might recall the action of Joseph Chamberlain, when in 1895 he preferred the Colonial Office—then considered as something of a dumping ground for second-class politicians—to any other Cabinet office. Joseph Chamberlain selected, with unerring vision, the Department in which the future lay. Thirty years later his son showed something of the same quality of vision in selecting the Ministry of Health. In its work lay in 1925 the key to the post-War reconstruction of National life.

HOUSING THE PEOPLE

IN England as in other countries the expectation of a prolonged peace, which was universal in 1919, brought with it the realization of the many problems which had to be faced by the statesmanship of peace. Foremost amongst these problems was that of the satisfactory housing of the population, which was an integral part of the twentieth century concept that every citizen of a free country should, in return for his services to the community, find within reach a healthy and hygienic home. In 1919 there were many citizens who had rendered quite exceptional services to the community. But in the nature of things the effort to maintain the standard of housing accommodation had not been able to keep pace with the accelerated tempo of such splendid service. The housing situation was in 1919 necessarily worse than it had been in 1914. During the War there had been a natural cessation of house building, with the result that the shortage already existing before the War was seriously aggravated at its conclusion. In addition to the cessation of building there was the actual physical deterioration of individual buildings during the period of the War; and there was further the increase in the standards demanded, which rendered a larger proportion of houses unfit for human habitation according to current conceptions. The result was that there existed in 1919 a housing shortage of between five hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand houses in addition to the one hundred

thousand houses which were estimated to be necessary to meet the annual requirements of the population.

The Coalition had produced the slogan, "Homes for heroes," and it was clearly their duty to do something to implement their promises. Very soon after the War in 1919 the Housing and Town Planning Act was passed. This was viewed to some extent as an emergency measure to cope with the immediate problem. A programme for building half a million houses was envisaged, and by the machinery of the Act local authorities were to be subsidized in the erection of houses. The principle adopted was that the State should be responsible for any deficit in the erection of houses, less only the amount produced by a penny rate in each local area. This was a vicious principle, for there was clearly no incentive to induce the local authorities, who were engaged in the actual business of erection, to build cheaply. The Act was also severely criticized, on the ground that it did not provide a subsidy for the private builder, who was in consequence at a disadvantage in relation to the local authority. A later Act was passed to meet this criticism, whereby subsidies were also granted to private builders. The effect of these schemes was so to send up the prices of houses that the State's liability in respect of increasing cost and loan charges came to be enormous. At the same time the price of building materials soared so that by January 1921 the general increase was 170 per cent over the pre-War level. In fact Dr. Addison, Minister of Health in the Coalition Government, admitted that a house similar to the type which in 1913 had cost £250 was now costing four times that amount. The result was the setting up of a Departmental Committee, which in its Report condemned the principle of the 1919 Act, and called in the interests of economy

for a limit to be fixed to the number of houses to be erected under that Act. At the same time Dr. Addison was replaced as Minister by Sir Alfred Mond, who wound up the scheme, and limited its operation to 176,000 houses already provided for by approved tenders. There was an annual loss on each of these houses of £35 a year, which was to be borne by tax payers and rate payers for two generations. Such was the unpromising position that was inherited by the Conservative Government in 1922.

Mr. Chamberlain, as we have seen, was not appointed to the Ministry of Health until the spring of 1923, and his tenure of office was interrupted in the summer by his appointment to the Exchequer. In that short time however he was able to render substantial assistance in evolving order out of chaos. The course pursued at the Ministry of Health by the Coalition Government came into conflict with two aspects of Mr. Chamberlain's make-up. The somewhat incoherent and unco-ordinated system of subsidies and State assistance did not march in step with his methodical and business-like mind. Nor could he altogether approve of the relegation to such a secondary position of private enterprise; for Mr. Chamberlain was and has remained a believer, so far as normal times are concerned, in the efficacy of private enterprise; even in abnormal times he believes that more can be done by private enterprise than is generally recognized by easily excited theorists. The Housing Act of 1923, which was popularly known as the Chamberlain Act because it was his duty as Minister of Health to pilot the measure through the House of Commons and secure its acceptance there, reflected, though it did not altogether derive from, the application to housing of Mr. Chamberlain's mental attitude.

Thus the primary object of the Act was to provide

for the stimulation of private enterprise by assisting the building trade in order to expedite the erection of houses. To this end private builders became eligible for the subsidy, and facilities were instituted for enabling local authorities to lend money to people undertaking the building of houses. Hitherto, the power of local authorities had been restricted to advancing loans to the purchasers of houses, and had not extended to builders. The amount which by the Act local authorities were empowered to advance was no less than 90 per cent of the value of the house. But, though the function of the local authorities in the financing of housing was thus readily welcomed, the principle followed was to limit their activity in the sphere of actual building, for they were to undertake the erection of houses only if satisfied that local needs could best be met in this manner. The whole relationship therefore between local authorities and private enterprise in the sphere of housing was revised, if not reversed; and Mr. Chamberlain's Housing Act of 1923 has been aptly described as "the charter of private enterprise." At the same time Mr. Chamberlain's Act recognized the need for economy, and strove to eliminate the anomalies of the Addison Scheme. The chief anomaly was the limitation of liability in the case of local authorities which had in consequence no direct incentive to economize in building. To cure this evil the new Act limited the Exchequer's liability so that it should not exceed a stated maximum for each house. Further instead of the subsidy being paid wholesale and indiscriminately as had been the practice under the Addison Scheme, Mr. Chamberlain introduced the healthy and necessary principle that the establishment of need must precede the payment of subsidy. As a means of putting this principle into effect a maximum selling price was fixed of £600; houses of

a superior type to this were to be ineligible for subsidy. It would not be in place here to refer to the detailed provisions of the Act, but another sociological aspect of Mr. Chamberlain's general attitude to the housing question can be seen from these provisions and from the support which he gave to the Building Societies Movement. He was anxious that so far as possible the people should be able to own the houses in which they lived, and he realized that no true solution of the housing problem could be found which did not provide for this aspect of the case. In this he was giving effect to one of the principles of Conservatism which envisages a nation of householders, enjoying family life and pursuing the traditional domestic virtues as against the socialized conception of swarms of urban flat dwellers leading standardized near-communal lives.

Short as was Mr. Chamberlain's period at the Ministry of Health in 1923 he had the satisfaction not only of successfully getting his Housing Bill on the Statute Book, but of seeing its success recognized albeit with reluctance even by his political opponents. A notable tribute was paid to his work: "From the moment Mr. Neville Chamberlain took charge of the Ministry the atmosphere instantly changed for the better and he earned golden opinions by his clear-cut definitions of housing policy which were eventually transformed into the Housing and Rent Restrictions Acts. His work brought prestige to the Government and secured for him a Parliamentary popularity which has rarely been obtained in so short a time. He proved that the Unionist Government was true to the tradition of Disraeli, who placed social reform in the forefront of his policy."

The debates of the Housing Legislation in the session of 1923 made Mr. Chamberlain's parliamentary reputation. His skill in meeting objections,

his lucidity in exposition and his willingness to listen to other points of view were readily admitted even by those who, remembering the failure of 1917, had been critical of his appointment. Until this time the failure of 1917 had hung around his neck like the albatross about the Ancient Mariner. The year 1923 relieved him of his burden. Thereafter the 1917 episode lapsed on the whole from public memory, except for chance references prompted by some seeming topicality, until the recollection of it was revived by the publication of Mr. Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*.

Even more important than Mr. Chamberlain's personal success was the success of the scheme. By the time the Conservative Government went to the polls in December of 1923 Mr. Chamberlain was able to say: "It is a source of unqualified satisfaction to me that under the new Housing Act for which I was responsible last session upwards of 45,000 new houses have already been approved. In fact all the indications show that the number of houses which will be built during the twelve months after the passing of the Act is likely to be greater than any year since 1919. This is the surest and quickest way to lead up to the clearance and improvement of our slum areas which I so earnestly desire to see." Within less than twelve months he was able to reply triumphantly to Mr. Mosley's attack upon his housing record as Minister of Health by stating in his election address at the Ladywood election in 1924: "The success of the Housing Act for which I was responsible as Minister of Health has been demonstrated by the information reluctantly drawn from the present (Socialist) Under-Secretary—no less than 161,000 houses have been authorized and the rate of erection has employed all labour and materials available."

The political gossips who were inclined to see a setback in Mr. Chamberlain's appointment to the Ministry of Health instead of to the Exchequer in November 1924, would have done well to ponder the words in which *The Times* greeted his second spell at the Ministry of Health. After referring to the growth of the scope and activity of the Ministry *The Times* went on: "In view of this development it is unfortunate that the new Department should have had no fewer than five Ministers in as many years. Equally it is a matter on which the country may congratulate itself that the Department has now been accepted by a Minister who preferred it to any office of greater prestige because he was convinced that none offered him a greater opportunity of serving his time and his country. Mr. Neville Chamberlain is of all candidates by far the best fitted for the office of Minister of Health, since the problems which face the Ministry call for just such a combination of experience in municipal government, business ability, and civic enthusiasm as he possesses. If he were as much concerned with his own political prestige as he is negligent of it, his choice would still have been wise; for his special gifts are likely to have full scope . . . there is work enough here for the most ambitious of Ministers, and it argues courage and self-confidence in one who knows the real difficulty of the *Ministerial* problems so well as Mr. Chamberlain that he is willing to undertake so great a responsibility."

When he had first assumed office as Minister of Health in 1923 Mr. Chamberlain had compared the difficulties of the problem of housing to "a skein of wool inextricably entangled so that they could not find the end to begin unwinding it."

Owing to the success which attended his dual policy of encouraging private enterprise in building and the

purchase of houses by those who were to live in them, the problems which confronted him at the end of 1924 were less acute and less involved. But it was grave for all that, and by common consent was perhaps second to none in importance at that time. Since his previous tenure of office there had intervened a period with the Glasgow Socialist, Mr. Wheatley, as Minister of Health. There had been too a new Housing Act in 1924, popularly known as the Wheatley Act. On the whole however Departmental discretion had succeeded in keeping Socialist experimentalism in reasonable check, with the result that in so far as the Act was concerned not with finance but with provision of houses it was substantially a re-enactment of the Chamberlain Scheme. There was a vindication of the principles embodied in his scheme in that a month before his taking office at the Ministry of Health for the second time only three out of over 1,300 local authorities undertaking schemes had chosen to transfer to the Wheatley Act from the Chamberlain Act.

The task confronting Mr. Chamberlain in 1924 was therefore in its essentials one of building on the foundations which he had already laid. The work was of a kind well suited to his temperament and inclination, consisting as it did of the practical application of his principles to the urgent and constructive business of housing. His second and longer period at the Ministry of Health was marked both by steady advance in the erection and provision of houses and by the passing of the Housing Act of 1925, which was a codification of past housing legislation and the foundation on which subsequent legislation has been based. With regard to the actual provision of houses bald figures are more eloquent than words. In the five years before the War the average annual increase in the number of houses

was 61,000. In the four years 1920-23 the total number of houses built was 251,988, i.e., an annual average of about 63,000. In 1924 the figure was 86,210; in 1925 it was 136,889; in 1926 it was 173,426; in 1927 it was 217,629. This tremendous increase was made at the time of Mr. Chamberlain's direction of housing policy and administration.

But impressive as was this advance in the matter of the construction of houses, it did not exhaust the front along which the Ministry was pressing forward. The Housing Act of 1925 itself shows clearly how much wider was the view taken with regard to housing than the mere erection of houses. It was recognized not only that every citizen had the right to a roof over his head, but that there were certain standards of hygiene and accommodation below which such houses must not fall. This latter realization necessitated to some extent an abandonment of the old concept that an Englishman's home is his castle. No longer could the drawbridges be removed and the portcullis be thrust down against all those armed with the paternal jurisdiction of the State. Thus the Act of 1925 gave to local authorities remedial powers of interference in cases where houses were insanitary or for various reasons unfit for human habitation. The Act provided for periodical inspection of houses by the appropriate officers of the local authority. Where a house was found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation, power was given to the local authority to compel the owner to do the repairs necessary to make it so; in the event of his failure so to do, the local authority was empowered itself to carry out the repairs recovering the cost from the recalcitrant owner. In the worst cases where a house was in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation, then it was for the local authority

in accordance with the Act to prohibit the use of the house until it was made fit for human habitation; if after three months it had not been made fit, the local authority was to make a demolition order. Effect was given to similar principles by the prohibition of back-to-back houses, and by the power given to local authority to demolish obstructive buildings which, though not themselves insanitary, shut out light or air from other buildings.

Enough has been said with regard to the housing legislation to show that it was not founded on any view of the absolute sanctity of private property. Powers of compulsion were given in order that the standard laid down might be obtained. Mr. Chamberlain was no more anxious than any other Conservative to apply the principle of compulsion to private property or private life. But, just as an army takes its pace from the slowest unit, so in matters of housing the contamination of a few defective premises or of an isolated back-sliding householder must inevitably spread unless decisively checked. The compulsory powers assumed by the Housing Acts are directed to exorcizing the bad householder and the defective premises in the interests of the community as a whole for whom it is desired to provide healthy housing suited to a healthy nation.

Inevitably from time to time there was criticism of Mr. Chamberlain's work, which he preferred to answer not so much in words as in the practical illustration of the good that such proposals could do. The work done in his earliest years at the Ministry of Health has in fact provided the foundation for the Housing legislation of the present time.

The Act of 1925 was the last contribution with regard to housing placed on the Statute Book by Mr. Chamberlain. But, though, as we shall see in the next chapter, he was responsible in the later

years of his period of Minister of Health for various measures of first importance in the life and industry of the country, the work of housing went steadily on during those years. It went on not only in the matter of the extended provision of houses, of which some figures have already been quoted, but in preparing the ground for a further application of those principles which animated his direction of housing policy. Housing legislation to-day in Great Britain is codified in the Housing Act of 1936 which incorporates the main provision of the Acts of 1925, 1930 and 1935. The Act of 1930 was actually passed during the short period of Socialist administration, when Mr. Chamberlain was of course out of office; but it is not a Socialist measure in any real sense of the word, for the Socialist Party adopted the work and the principles of the Ministry. In Great Britain the civil servants who compose the administrative officers of the Government Departments, are permanent; they do not change with the political complexion of the Government, and are therefore a stabilizing influence on policy. The Act of 1935 was designed still further to extend these principles, particularly in the direction of slum clearance, when it was felt that recovery from the economic crises had gone so far as to justify a further offensive. The beginnings of slum clearance were implicit in the Act of 1925, and it was a subject in which Mr. Chamberlain had an interest that was natural, life-long, and hereditary. For was not his father chief among the pioneers of slum clearance in this country by reason of the great work which he had achieved in the city of Birmingham sixty years before?

Another hereditary interest of Mr Chamberlain's was in the question of Town-Planning, of which his father had also been a pioneer. In this direction too a considerable advance was made during Mr.

Chamberlain's period as Minister of Health, for 1925 saw, in addition to the Housing Act of that year, the passage of the Town-Planning Act, which consolidated the law up to that time. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1932, which extended and completed the law in this regard in this country, was passed shortly after Mr. Chamberlain's third and last period at the Ministry of Health.

Slum Clearance, and to a lesser degree Town Planning, are—or rather were in more peaceful days—what the journalists call “news.” The housing of rural workers, who are engaged in providing the food of the people, is unhappily not “news” in the same degree. Slum clearance and town planning also belong to that sphere of municipal government in which Mr. Chamberlain, like his father before him, received his training for the public life of the nation. But two factors contributed to Mr. Chamberlain's interest in the work of housing the rural worker. One was his sense of fundamentals, which taught him that even in a predominantly industrial community the housing of the primary producer was no whit less important than that of the urban population; the other was his own innate love of the countryside. The result of this was the Housing of Rural Workers Act, which was passed into law in 1926. The effect of this Act was to place upon local authorities the duty of submitting schemes for the improvement or reconstruction of houses occupied by agricultural labourers or those working on the land. They were empowered to make grants up to two-thirds of the costs of these works, to a maximum of £100, in order to assist in the work of improvement. This measure was one which lay close to Mr. Chamberlain's heart, and he sometimes describes it as his own particular Act. It is an Act which has a family interest for the Chamberlains, for Mr. Chamberlain's sister, in her

THE CONSTRUCTIVE YEARS

IT is one of the peculiar characteristics of political and national life that its better and more tranquil periods are generally appreciated as such only in retrospect. To people living in the twilight of the 1930's and at the dawn of the 1940's the period lying between 1924 and 1929 takes on the aspect almost of a golden age. Let me hasten to say that it did not bear this complexion to those who encountered the problems of those days. There was in Great Britain the General Strike and the prolonged coal-mining controversy; there were industrial disputes and economic difficulties left behind by the War; there was unemployment, and there was the persistent complexity of how best to maintain the highest standard of life in Europe with an inadequately protected home market.

All these things loomed, and naturally loomed very large, on the contemporary horizon. But, in spite of problems and difficulties, crisis and tension were still the exception rather than the rule; they were variations on the main theme of steady uphill efforts, and had not yet become the main theme themselves. In the international sphere, despite underground rumblings which for those who had ears to hear were the first muted mutterings of the gathering storm, it was the golden afternoon of harmony and co-operation. Sir Austen Chamberlain, then at the British Foreign Office, was one of that trio, of whom M. Briand and Herr Stresemann were

the other two, which worked to evolve a just and peaceful settlement of European difficulties. Their task was not easy—such a task never could be easy—but it filled Europe with an after-glow of hope, which seemed to compensate for the false dawn of Versailles. The genial atmosphere of hope and confidence was one in which the minds of the people and of those whose lot it was to guide their destinies, could turn inward to the contemplation of the constructive things of peace. Progress could be achieved by building for the future, undistracted by the urgent and imperative demands of crisis, which, whether economic, constitutional or international, has crabbled and confined the efforts of statesmanship in later years. It was an atmosphere ideally suited to the temperament of Mr. Chamberlain, who was a member of the Conservative Government which ruled Great Britain during that period. It became the fashion amongst superior persons to deride the Conservative Government of that time; but the cold and impartial records of history show a volume of achievement of which any government could be proud.

A large proportion of this achievement during these constructive years lay in the sphere of the Ministry of Health. Mr. Chamberlain was happy in five years of practical work, in which he had the felicity of seeing his schemes taking shape under his hands. The matter of housing has already been dealt with; but housing, though perhaps the most important, was only one aspect of the business of the Ministry of Health. Of the individual measures with which he was associated Mr. Chamberlain himself ranked the Local Government Act of 1929 as the most important because of its wide scope and range of interests, and the Housing Act of 1923—the Chamberlain Act—as the next most important. His

most difficult Parliamentary achievement of those years, however, he considers to be the piloting through the House of Commons on to the Statute Book of the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925. This was a measure bold in concept, but technical and controversial in its provisions. Great as is the importance of this Act, I do not feel justified in a general work of this nature in enlarging upon the scope of it. Its importance may be gauged however from the fact that it forms the basis of the rating system in Great Britain to-day.

Of more human interest is Mr. Chamberlain's work in providing Old Age Pensions and Pensions for Widows and Orphans. The Conservative Government of 1923, in which Mr. Chamberlain had been successively Minister of Health and Chancellor of the Exchequer, had set up a committee to inquire into the financial possibilities of providing a new and comprehensive scheme of pensions. By the time that the Conservatives returned to office in 1924 the committee had reported, and there was a vast amount of material to hand. Immediately Mr. Chamberlain and his staff addressed themselves to the problem and, in his own words, "worked on it pretty well night and day." It was Mr. Chamberlain's duty to supervise the drafting of the Bill and then to pilot it through the House of Commons. The effect of the Act was to provide pensions for the widows of insured persons at the rate of ten shillings a week with 5s. a week for the eldest, or only child, and 3s. a week for younger children. Orphans received pensions at the rate of 7s. 6d. a week and old age pensions for men or women from the age of sixty-five at the rate of 10s. a week. At the same time the Act, true to Conservative principle in refusing to discourage thrift, did away with the vicious principle, formerly obtaining in the case of con-

tributory pensions, that the beneficiaries were subjected to inquiry and investigation to see whether they had other means of livelihood which could be taken into account in assessing pensions. It was undoubtedly a measure of great social value and perhaps not altogether unworthy of consideration for the high claim made for it by Mr. Chamberlain that "planned as it is on broad and generous lines it constitutes the greatest advance, the greatest measure of social reform that has ever been introduced by any Party in any country."

One point should especially be noticed about this pensions scheme. It was contributory; that is to say, the pensions were given as a result of contribution made in the past. It is true that the weekly contribution was only fourpence in the case of men and twopence in the case of women. But it is also true that had men had to insure themselves, without assistance from employers, the benefit of these pensions would have cost a boy of sixteen starting his policy, 10d. a week, a man of twenty-five 1s. 4½d. a week, a man of fifty 4s. 11d. a week, and a man of sixty 16s. 8d. a week. But the principle, nevertheless, remained that the pensions were contributory, and therefore belonged to the beneficiaries as of right. Mr. Chamberlain defended this principle against the Socialist suggestion of non-contributory pensions. "I tell you that a non-contributory system is absolutely impossible. The country could not stand the financial burden . . . but I tell you even if I thought a non-contributory scheme could be carried out, I would myself have nothing to do with it. It is in my opinion absolutely inevitable that in any system under which the whole benefits are received as a gift from the State, the State must exercise constant supervision and make constant and searching inquiry. I have a better opinion of my fellow countrymen and

women than to believe they are going to be bribed by promises of indiscriminate charity. I believe that British working-men and women would always rather pay what little they can and be able to claim that what they get is not a dole, but a right for which they have paid, because in that way they preserve that sturdy independence and that self-respect which characterizes them as it does every free and self-respecting people."

It is impossible here to attempt to give a satisfactory account of the provisions of the Local Government Act, which chiefly occupied Mr. Chamberlain during the latter part of his long term at the Ministry of Health. As Mr. Chamberlain at the Ministry of Health observed: "to the ordinary citizen, immersed in his profession or in the conduct of commercial affairs, the subject of local affairs seems to offer a somewhat forbidding aspect . . . a Local Government Bill of unusual length, and ranging over the whole field of administration in town and country, must indeed be caviare to the general." Nevertheless the Act is of great importance in the ever-increasing sphere of local government. The aspect of the measure which attracted most attention at the time was that which provided for the de-rating of agricultural land and buildings and of productive industry. This was part of the general policy for stimulating industry and decreasing unemployment by relieving industry of some of its overhead burden. At the same time it was obviously equitable that it should be so relieved, since there are many municipal services for which the rates provide, such as education, libraries, and recreation facilities from which the manufacturer derives no direct benefit. Finally in 1929 the Local Government Act, complete with de-rating and other provisions passed into law as the most substantial contribution made to the Statute

Book by the Conservative Party in over four years of office.

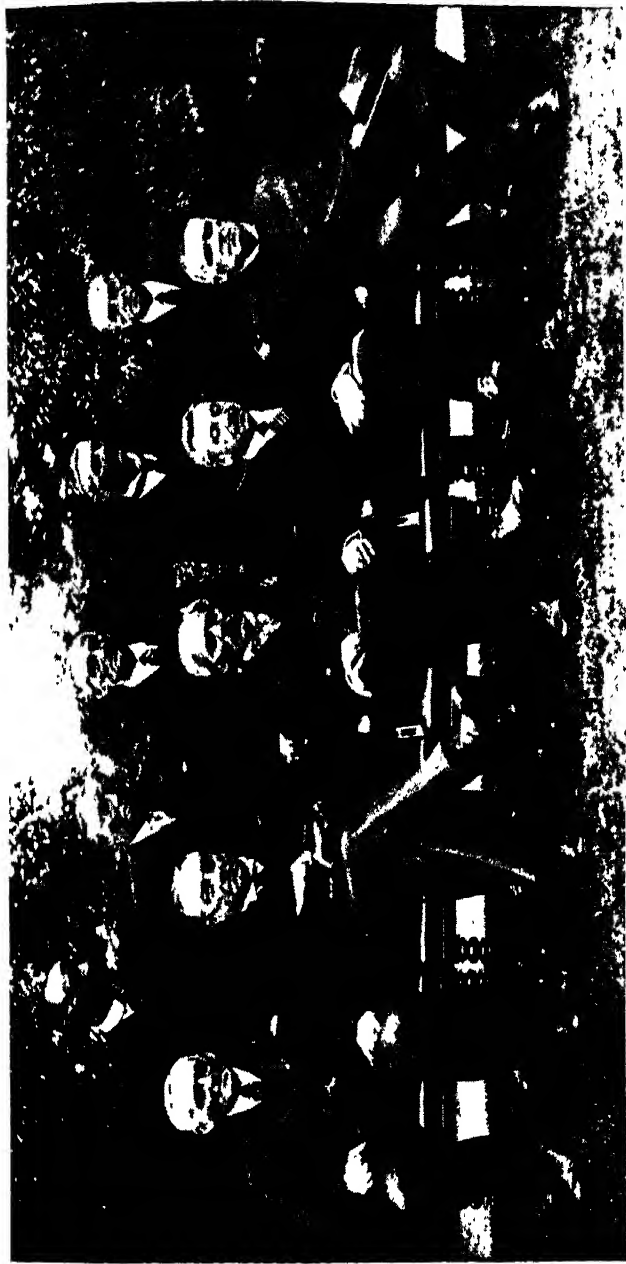
The country as a whole did not pretend to understand the complexities of de-rating and of the Local Government Act, but it did appreciate their great importance. This appreciation was evidenced by the amount of newspaper comment on the proposed legislation and on its author. What clearly impressed observers at the time was the mastery which the Minister exercised over these difficult technicalities, and the pleasure which he undoubtedly took in their unravelling and administration. It was something of a surprise to find a Minister who was technically expert on the subject matter of his own Department. "De-rating," noted a light-hearted journal at this time, "is Mr. Neville's long suit . . . he discussed its intricacies and defended its mysteries with the enjoyment of an Einstein rollicking with Relativity." The same paper noted that he did not suffer Socialist jibes gladly, and that when he was angry he hit back hard and straight in his shirt sleeves. Mr. Chamberlain's success with the Local Government Act made his succession to the Conservative Leadership and the possibility of his Premiership a matter of more confident prediction than had hitherto been the case. It began to be seen that in this new England knowledge of local government and administrative experience might prove a better qualification for leadership than the more showy background which had been the traditional passport to political pre-eminence. This seems to have been recognized by a contemporary who compared his belated rise to political prominence with the brilliant beginnings of his brother Sir Austen. "In those plodding years in Birmingham Neville had been thoroughly grounded in Local Government, Housing, Rates, and all appertaining thereto; and while that knowledge and

experience was little use to him either as Postmaster-General or Paymaster-General, and still less use when he went to the Treasury, it stood him in excellent stead in the Ministry of Health. He stands out now, thoroughly master of the biggest measure the Government has produced in its longish life. He is as much at ease with that complicated and immense Bill as a juggler is with his three balls. Austen ought to be the next Premier if seniority and family precedence count; but . . . Neville has done so well in the Junior Ministry (and is besides without Coalition taint), that it is just possible that all the father's forcing-house work will prove vain, and Neville, the younger son, will achieve Joe's dynastic ambition to have a son follow him as Prime Minister of England." It was to be an exact prophecy, though spoken with little confidence yet in the autumn of 1928.

For the time being Mr. Chamberlain was busy with his great measure both in the House of Commons and in the country. It had been his custom throughout his period at the Ministry of Health to make tours of inspection and consultation all over the country; indeed by the end of his term of office there were few parts of England and Wales which he had not visited in his official capacity. In these tours he met members of local authorities, municipal officials, governors of hospitals, and the like, and with them consulted as to their proposals in regard to development, undertakings, and town planning, and advised them on their difficulties. In addition, these tours gave Mr. Chamberlain an insight into the needs and points of view of different parts of the country which is of great value to a politician who aspires to being a sympathetic administrator. In October of 1928, immediately before the House of Commons resumed for its autumn session, Mr. Chamberlain went on the

last of these tours. This time he went to his own country of the Midlands, where he undertook in a succession of speeches to explain the Poor Law reforms, which were so important an aspect of the Local Government Bill. After the session, which had been an exceptionally heavy one for him he went on a short holiday to Spain. Back in London again in the New Year his speeches were still largely dominated by references to his own Bill, but a new factor was claiming the attention of politicians at the beginning of 1929. This, after over four years of Conservative Government, was the prospect of a General Election.

The closeness of the result at the Ladywood election in 1924 had shown that Mr. Chamberlain's constituency was not one which could be relied upon for permanent Conservative representation. Mr. Chamberlain decided therefore that, if the opportunity should present itself of a vacancy in a safer Birmingham seat, he would transfer. The opportunity did present itself, for Sir Francis Lowe, a prominent figure in Birmingham Conservatism was ready to retire from his representation of Edgbaston. Edgbaston lies on the outskirts of Birmingham, and is its leading residential suburb. As is not uncommonly the way with the residential suburbs of large cities, it is also a safe Conservative seat. Thus while Mr. Chamberlain had been struggling desperately for survival in his epic contest with Mr. Mosley in 1924, Sir Francis Lowe had been returned in Edgbaston by a comfortable majority of over three to one. This was clearly a seat which could give a hard-working Minister or leading Party Member the security which is desirable. The arrangements were soon made, for Edgbaston was nothing loth to adopt the Minister of Health and son of the great "Joe" as prospective candidate. Mr. Chamberlain was



FIRST NATIONAL CABINET, AUGUST 1931

Left to right (front row): Lord Snowden, Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald, Sir Herbert Samuel, Lord Sankey.
(Back row): Sir F. Cunliffe Lister, J. H. Thomas, Lord Reading, Neville Chamberlain and Sir Samuel Hoare.

naturally subjected to considerable criticism by the Opposition for this manœuvre, and was inevitably charged with running away from Ladywood. In fact, though the practice of private members leaving marginal seats to seek a safer refuge is almost universally to be condemned, Cabinet Ministers are in a rather different category. It may well be difficult, if not impossible, for a Cabinet Minister to perform his full Departmental and Parliamentary duties in addition to giving the time necessary to nursing a difficult seat. In Mr. Chamberlain's case there was, in addition to this general consideration, another factor. Edgbaston and Ladywood Conservative Associations were both affiliated to the Birmingham Unionist Association, and much of the Conservative activity in that city is directed and co-ordinated by its central headquarters. Thus Mr. Chamberlain in moving from Ladywood to Edgbaston, remained one of the members for Birmingham.

The signal for the anticipated General Election came in the early spring of 1929. It was from the Conservative point of view a most unsatisfactory election in many respects. It was fought not because the Government desired to win the support of the country on any particular issue, but because it was made necessary by effluxion of time. The Conservative Government had a good record to place before the country, but little by way of programme. The record was particularly good so far as Mr. Chamberlain was concerned since one and a half million people had benefited under the Widows, Orphans, and Old Age Pensions Act of 1925, eight hundred thousand houses had been built for the workers in four years, considerable advance had been made in the various health services, and the great de-rating project for Industry and Agriculture had been carried through. But elections are not won on the records of Govern-

ment. Mr. Baldwin seems to have realized that in 1923 when he took the offensive on the Protectionist issue; in that year he adopted the correct principle though his application of it was wrong. By 1929 he had forgotten the principle. The Conservative Party fought a defensive campaign on the record of the late Government and took the field with the uninspiring device of "Safety First" inscribed upon their banners.

The Socialist Party, on the other hand, and Mr. Lloyd George's Liberals focussed attention upon the unemployment issue. They accused the Government of failing in constructive effort in this regard, and by way of pointing the contrast produced voluminous proposals of their own. The Socialist Party produced a handbook entitled *Labour and the Nation*; and Mr. Lloyd George produced a slogan "We can conquer unemployment." Mr. Chamberlain was perhaps himself uneasily aware of the disadvantageous ground on which his party was fighting, when he declared in a speech at Bradford with reference to Mr. Lloyd George "I could not really attempt to compete in that respect with the greatest promise maker, and some would say promise breaker, in this country to-day."

As far as Mr. Chamberlain's own new constituency at Edgbaston was concerned, he was able to compete with all opposition very satisfactorily, for he defeated his Socialist opponent by a majority of nearly three to one and his Liberal opponent by a margin of about five to one. With a safe seat like Edgbaston, however, Mr. Chamberlain, as perhaps the leading constructive Minister of the late Government, was naturally much in demand for speeches in more hardly fought divisions. In these, as in the country at large, the election went badly. The Conservative representation dropped from over four hundred to

two hundred and sixty, which was twenty-eight less than the Socialist representation; one of the seats lost to Socialism—though only narrowly—was Mr. Chamberlain's former constituency of Ladywood. The balance was held by Mr. Lloyd George's handful of fifty-nine Liberals. Thus although the country had given no clear indication of the form of Government which it preferred, it appeared to have given a clear negative indication that it did not want to continue with the Baldwin administration. So at any rate Mr. Baldwin interpreted the electoral result, and consequently he resigned his office, recommending the King to call upon Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, as Leader of the largest party in the House of Commons, to form a Government. The Socialist leaders had declared that they would not again form a minority Government, and had appealed to the country to give them a clear majority. On receiving the invitation however, Mr. MacDonald speedily overcame any reluctance which he may have felt and undertook the responsibilities of Government. For the second time Great Britain had a Socialist Government, and Mr. Chamberlain's work at the Ministry of Health was for the time being brought to an end.

The Socialist Party position was so much stronger in 1929 than it had been in 1923 that it looked as if the interruption of Mr. Chamberlain's official life would be of longer duration. With this in mind, and considering that his long and arduous labours at the Ministry of Health justified a change more radical than the ordinary summer holiday, Mr. Chamberlain decided upon a trip which he had for some time had in mind. He decided to visit East Africa. His choice fell upon East Africa partly because he had friends and associations there, but mainly because it gave him the opportunity of combining a pleasant trip

with a study of the problems of mandated territories which are so important an aspect of imperial development. The trip was duly planned to take effect in the autumn. Accompanied by Mrs. Chamberlain and his daughter Dorothy, who was by now a girl of sixteen, Mr. Chamberlain crossed by land to Marseilles and embarked on the 12th of December. After spending Christmas at sea, they finally landed at Mombasa on the morning of the 30th of December.

After a day spent in Mombasa they travelled on to Nairobi, and saluted the New Year of 1930 on the plains of Athi. Arrived at Nairobi the party stayed at Government House from which Mr. Chamberlain was able to carry out his inspection of schools, hospitals, and the laboratories where research was being conducted to improve local crops. All this was quite in keeping with an ex-Cabinet Minister's tour; but Mr. Chamberlain had one experience of a more adventurous kind. It happened on the Plains of Athi, which contain some of the finest game in the world. One of the game wardens asked the Chamberlains if they would like to have a closer inspection of the animals than was possible from the plains. They were naturally only too ready to avail themselves of the offer, and the party which set out in a motor-car consisted of the three Chamberlains, two wardens and a native driver. After a time they sighted a rhinoceros, and pursued it across a donga.¹ Unfortunately the rhinoceros did not appreciate their civil intentions and when the party had got to within a hundred yards of him he exhibited unmistakable symptoms of displeasure. The driver prudently beat a retreat, but not very far; for in recrossing the donga, one of the wheels sank, and the car stuck fast. The rhinoceros did not pursue his aggressive intentions

¹ A donga is a South African name for a channel formed by water. It is generally, as in this case, practically dry.

but the car was left in the midst of the plains in the falling darkness. Hour succeeded hour, and there were three empty places at table in Government House fifteen miles away where a dinner and reception was in progress. All around the car could be heard the nocturnal roarings and snortings of the beasts of the jungle. Though there were known to be lions in the vicinity, the party came to no harm, and were duly rescued towards midnight by a car which had been sent out to search for them, and which was guided to them by the pilot-light of the Chamberlains' car glowing into the sky as a signal. By half-past one the party was back in Nairobi and joining in the Government House reception.

From Nairobi Mr. Chamberlain went to inspect a dairy farm, and from thence to Nyeri for an afternoon's fishing for rainbow trout in a stream flowing from Mount Kenya. The journey back to Nairobi Mr. Chamberlain accomplished on the front of the engine, talking to the driver, and getting a magnificent view of the countryside. Before leaving Kenya Mr. Chamberlain was taken by Lord Delamere through the precipitous Rift Valley, where the lakes were made decorative by the thousands of pink-feathered flamingos.

From Kenya the party went on to Uganda, a hot country of much less equitable temperature than Kenya. On the 19th of January the Chamberlain family arrived by train at Jinja, near by the source of the Nile. Naturally from there they went to see the Victoria Falls which Mr. Chamberlain found to be one of the most impressive sights of his tour. He went also to Lake Albert, crossing the lake by steamer and continuing up the Nile as far as the Murchison Falls. At Entebbe he was to have been received by the Kabake, the native ruler of Uganda; but this gentleman was suffering from influenza and was

represented by his empty throne draped by a Union Jack and placed upon a dais covered by skins. Mr. Chamberlain's intention on leaving Kenya was to cross the interior of Tanganyika and thus make his way back to the coast. Floods however had made railway transport impossible, and he was forced to return through Kenya instead. He crossed over this time to the island of Zanzibar, where he was received by the Sultan. From Zanzibar he returned to the mainland at Dar-es-Salaam, where he was the guest for four days of Sir Donald Cameron, Governor of the Tanganyika Territory. There he addressed the local chamber of commerce, and referred to the uncertainties of economic conditions in those parts: "It appears to be said that many people come out here with a little capital and no experience, and now there are many with a little experience and no capital." He recognized that one of the great problems of colonial administration is how to deal with territory in the tropics where white people have to live alongside a much more numerous and fairly civilized population of native races. Mr. Chamberlain was not able to see for himself at first hand much of the practical way in which the education of the native in self government was proceeding. But he heard enough from Sir Donald Cameron and others to make him an optimist as to the ultimate success of this policy.

The Chamberlains returned to England towards the end of March 1930, and Mr. Chamberlain was able to survey with a fresh mind the new political situation which confronted him. Already there were signs of the serious divergence between Socialist promises and Socialist performance; but these were to some extent overshadowed by the difficulties and disputes that were becoming apparent in the Conservative Party. The severe defeat of 1929 had

caused keen searchings of heart in the ranks of Conservative supporters. It was widely felt that the machine required a thorough overhaul, and that Mr. Baldwin's appearance of complacency in face of high unemployment figures had been electorally disastrous. Criticisms of both Leader and machine mounted during the summer months of 1929. At the Conservative Party Conference in November of that year it was found necessary to carry a resolution of confidence in Mr. Baldwin's leadership which was adopted only after he had declared his acceptance of Imperial development as the basis of his policy. Another result of the dissatisfaction felt at this time was the setting up of a Conservative Research Department, to assist with propaganda and formulation of policy. Of this Department Mr. Chamberlain was made the head. The new Department had, and continues to have, premises in Old Queen Street, overlooking St. James's Park. With this organization and its personnel Mr. Chamberlain has maintained a close contact in subsequent years.

Mr. Baldwin had accepted Imperial development, but he had not defined it. What form was it to take? The official policy of the Conservative Party at this time was not one of full-blooded Protection, but what was called Safeguarding of Industry. This was far from satisfying many members of the Party, who desired a more coherent and a more comprehensive scheme of Imperial preference. Thus Mr. Amery, Secretary for Colonies in the late Conservative administration, and disciple of Joseph Chamberlain, declared in a speech at Birmingham that he felt it vital that there should be a loophole for food taxes if necessary and that he was willing to resign from the Shadow Cabinet¹ on this issue. Even more

¹ The Shadow Cabinet is the term applied in Great Britain to the Opposition leaders who would be in the Cabinet if their party were in Office.

definite action was taken by Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the *Express* group of British newspapers who had launched his Empire Free Trade campaign in a speech in the House of Lords in November 1929. In the following February he formed a United Empire Party to advocate the policy of Empire Free Trade. Mr. Baldwin countered with a proposal that a referendum of the country might be taken at a future date on the subject of food taxes. With this Lord Beaverbrook was satisfied and rejoined the Conservative Party. Lord Rothermere on the other hand, who had wider points of difference with Mr. Baldwin's policy, remained in what was virtually independent opposition.

This was the state of affairs in the Conservative Party which greeted Mr. Chamberlain on his return from East Africa. Criticism continued to be directed against the leadership of Mr. Baldwin, the direction of the party machine, and official lukewarmness in the cause of Protection. Faced with this position, Mr. Baldwin acted with that astuteness which rarely deserted him in moments of difficulty. What step could he take that would blunt the edge of criticism without compromising his own position or his independent action? He could invite Mr. Chamberlain to become Chairman of the Party in place of Mr. J. C. C. Davidson, at whose door critics were inclined to lay the blame for the ill-success of the 1929 election. The Chairman of the Conservative Party is a sort of chief Party Boss, who is in control of the machine. Mr. Chamberlain's appointment however would not only offset criticism directed at the Party machine. It would publicly associate with Mr. Baldwin the most capable and successful administrator of the late Government; and, perhaps most important of all, it would be a sop to the Protectionists, since Mr. Chamberlain, both by heredity and his own

convictions, was identified with the Protectionist element. The invitation was therefore extended to Mr. Chamberlain, to take effect on the eve of a special meeting summoned by Mr. Baldwin, to meet at the end of June. It was not an offer which held much inherent attraction for Mr. Chamberlain. It was, though a position of great practical importance, not one which was ordinarily held by men of Cabinet status. Further, in order to do justice to it at a time of such criticism and difficulty within the Party, it would be necessary to forgo practically all other activities for the duration of his service as Chairman. On the other hand, in the critical state of the Party's fortunes it was not an offer which he could conscientiously refuse, and he decided to shoulder the burden. His underlying reluctance emerges quite clearly from the letter in which he accepted Mr. Baldwin's offer.

37 EATON SQUARE, S.W.1

June 23rd, 1930

MY DEAR STANLEY,

I have given much anxious thought to your pressing request that I should, for a time at least, undertake the Chairmanship of the Party. In ordinary circumstances I should never have considered the acceptance of a post which is at best a thankless one, involves much additional work, and must inevitably necessitate frequent absence from the House of Commons. But I am anxious, as always, to serve the Party wherever my services may be most useful, and, since you think that, by taking over the responsibilities of the Chairman, I can best help the cause, I am ready to meet your desires.

I only wish to make one stipulation—namely, that I may be released from the Office as soon as I can report to you that I have carried out such measures of reorganization as I may find to be desirable, and that the work can be expected to proceed smoothly without me. If you agree, I would

suggest that I should take over immediately after the conference on July 1, in order that I may have time to put things in train before the holidays.

Yours ever

N. CHAMBERLAIN

To this letter Mr. Baldwin replied:

HOUSE OF COMMONS

June 23rd, 1930

MY DEAR NEVILLE,

Your letter of this morning has given me great pleasure.

I am convinced that you can render our Party a service at this moment which no one else is capable of giving. I thank you for the self-sacrifice which you are showing in accepting a post so onerous and so thankless.

I agree to your stipulation and it will be for the general convenience if you take over immediately after the forthcoming conference.

Yours ever

STANLEY BALDWIN

Mr. Chamberlain therefore, as Chairman both of the Conservative Party and of the Research Department found himself principally responsible for the Conservative Party at the time of one of the most severe internal struggles which even its chequered history has experienced. In October Mr. Baldwin was still hedging on food taxes, and the long letter, which he sent to Mr. Chamberlain as Party Chairman on the 15th of October, setting out the full official policy of the Party, did not satisfy all sections. In addition to the opposition of the groups headed by Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook, there was a considerable element among Conservative Members of Parliament, headed by Colonel Gretton and Sir Henry Page-Croft, which was also dissatisfied with the Baldwin policy. By this time there was a

very real movement in favour of terminating the leadership of Mr. Baldwin. Two factors however operated in favour of Mr. Baldwin at this low-water mark of his political fortunes. The first was the traditional loyalty of the Conservative Party to its Leader, and the second was that Mr. Baldwin's critics did not appear to have any very definite views as to who should properly succeed him in the Leadership. The second factor depended in part upon the first, for leading Conservatives like Mr. Chamberlain, who would have been more acceptable to the Protectionist elements, remained loyal to Mr. Baldwin.

The end of October 1930 saw the struggle come to a head in the open. There were two aspects of it. It was resolved to challenge Mr. Baldwin in the Leadership at a meeting of Conservative Peers, Members of Parliament, and Candidates, to be held on the 30th of October. At the same time Lord Beaverbrook resolved to forward his policy through the medium of by-elections, and it so happened that there fell for decision at this time a by-election in South Paddington. In this safe Conservative constituency newspaper influence was strong, and the appeal of Empire Free Trade considerable. The Conservative candidate therefore, Sir H. Lidiard, announced his allegiance both to Mr. Baldwin and to Lord Beaverbrook. Mr. Chamberlain at once interposed to tell him that he must choose between the two, as official candidates must owe allegiance only to the Leader of the Party. As far as the immediate election was concerned, these tactics were successful, for Sir H. Lidiard announced his sole allegiance to Mr. Baldwin. Immediately, however, an Empire Free Trade candidate arose, in the person of Admiral Taylor, whose vigour and rhetorical ability considerably surpassed that of the official candidate.

While the contest was being waged with great energy and enormous publicity in South Paddington, preparations were being made for the Conservative meeting on the 30th of October. When the day for the meeting arrived, it was soon discovered that, in spite of an undercurrent of deep and genuine dissatisfaction with Mr. Baldwin's Leadership, for the two reasons stated above the opposition was not likely to shake Mr. Baldwin very severely. So it turned out, for when the division was taken after the debate on a motion of confidence in Mr. Baldwin's leadership, Mr. Baldwin was confirmed in his position by a majority of 462 to 116. There can be no doubt that a considerable part of Mr. Baldwin's success was due to the fact that none of his colleagues would put themselves up, or suffer themselves to be put up, in opposition to him in the Leadership.

The rejoicing of official Conservatives over this victory was short lived, for on the following day the result of the Paddington poll was declared, and with it the news that Admiral Taylor had won a victory for Empire Free Trade. Less than a week later the Conservatives succeeded in regaining the Shipley division of Yorkshire from the Socialists. And so the ding-dong struggle, waged by Mr. Chamberlain and the Conservative Party machine, continued on two fronts; they were engaged simultaneously in endeavouring to retrieve lost ground from the Socialists and to defend the unity of the Party against internal assault. As far as Mr. Chamberlain was concerned, he would have been better pleased if he could have bent all his efforts to the former objective, for loyal as he was to Mr. Baldwin, he could not but feel an instinctive sympathy for those who wished to make Protection the unmistakable creed of the Conservative Party. Unfortunately, as 1930 gave way to 1931, it began to look as if party unity was

further off than ever, for a new issue had arisen to divide Conservative opinion. This was the question formidable, fundamental, far-reaching, and little understood, of the Government of India.

As far as Mr. Chamberlain is concerned, he has never pretended to any great or expert knowledge of the affairs of India. He had never visited the country, and his heavy departmental duties precluded that measure of study necessary to base an authoritative opinion on so vexed and complicated a question. Temperamentally, however, he was in favour of the exercise of self-government and of training people for it, even where it must be viewed as to some extent experimental. But this view was by no means universal throughout the Conservative Party, and many who knew India best felt profound misgivings at the hostages which it was proposed to give to fortune in the East. Once again the Conservative popular press lent its powerful support to the opposition to Mr. Baldwin's policy of co-operating in granting self-government to India. In January of 1931 a brilliant figure, partial at that time to the doctrine of Free Trade and therefore not associated with Protectionist opposition to official Conservatism, detached himself from the ranks to lead the Opposition to Indian policy; Mr. Churchill withdrew from the Conservative Shadow Cabinet.

Mr. Churchill's withdrawal left Mr. Chamberlain without obvious rivals for the reversion to the Conservative Leadership after Mr. Baldwin. The only likely candidate was Sir Austen, but he was some years older than Mr. Baldwin, and had also been mainly identified of recent years with foreign affairs which in 1930 were not considered to be the best passport to the Premiership. In fact even before the withdrawal of Mr. Churchill, who had been technically his superior in the late Conservative

Government, Mr. Chamberlain had imperceptibly begun to be recognized as Mr. Baldwin's political heir-at-law, especially as Mr. Churchill's Liberal past was not forgotten in the Conservative Party. But in the spring of 1931 a prior question seemed to be, would there be an heritage for succession? In March the extent of the split in the Conservative Party was vividly illustrated by the great contest waged in the St. George's by-election. St. George's is one of the two Westminster divisions; and one of the strongest of the traditional Conservative seats. On the death of Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, former Secretary for War, therefore, a safe seat would ordinarily have been available for a Conservative. But instead of that an Independent Conservative was promptly in the field in the person of Sir Ernest Petter, who repudiated not only Mr. Baldwin's policy on Protection and India, but his leadership itself. His cause was espoused with tremendous energy by the Press, and it was found necessary to get Mr. Duff Cooper, who was already adopted as candidate for another division for the General Election, to abandon that constituency and to fight the St. George's by-election on behalf of the Official Party. It was an exceptionally hard fought contest, in which Mr. Baldwin himself took part, surprising his critics by the vigour of his intervention. In the result Mr. Duff Cooper succeeded in retaining the seat, but the unpalatable fact remained for those responsible for the party organization that in one of their impregnable strongholds an Independent in opposition had polled two-thirds of the Conservative vote.

The St. George's election left Mr. Chamberlain more than ever convinced of the futility and the unreality of the strife within the Party. It was indeed not inconsiderable irony that he, the son of the man who had led the crusading minority move-

ment in the Conservative Party on behalf of Protection, should be compelled by his position and his loyalty to spend his strength in combating those whose crime was their complete acceptance of Protection. Consequently when the St. George's election had resulted in victory, Mr. Chamberlain resolved on an effort at appeasement before the bitterness of strife should make it too difficult. He went therefore to Lord Beaverbrook asking him to set out the conditions on which he would support the Conservative Party. In reply Lord Beaverbrook asked for an assurance that the policy of the Conservative Party was directed not only to increasing manufacturing production, but also wheat and general agricultural production by the most efficient and practical methods, i.e., "By quotas, prohibition of, or duties on foreign foodstuffs." This was a reasonable attitude, since although Lord Beaverbrook adhered to his view that duties were normally the most effective method of protecting the home market, he did not exclude the principle of quotas. Mr. Chamberlain was much encouraged by this reply, which he at once took to Mr. Baldwin for consultation. As a result of this Mr. Chamberlain was able to communicate to Lord Beaverbrook Mr. Baldwin's intention of employing all or any of the methods enumerated "as they may best effect the object aimed at." He concluded his letter by welcoming Lord Beaverbrook's support. As a result partly of Mr. Chamberlain's initiative a most serious schism in the Party had been healed, and unity restored.

Differences of opinion in the Conservative Party remained, and still remain. But they had shown that "the cause was more than the quarrel." Mr. Chamberlain's initiative in closing the ranks had come none too soon. For already there were signs that the Socialist Government was unable to deal

with the stress of economic conditions as they began to present themselves to a perplexed world in the early months of 1931. The shadow of crisis began to slant across the scene; and at its approach the tempo of events quickened into a rush of action that swept the Socialists from the seats of power and made of the Party unity which Mr. Chamberlain had restored a wider political unanimity than the nation had hitherto known.

THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY

THE word "crisis" has become stale with use. In recent years it has almost lost its terrors, if not its meaning, since a slightly bewildered and apprehensive population has been assured that it moves from crisis to crisis. The year 1931 no longer remains, as it was considered at the time to be, the year of crisis. It has yielded that title to the year 1938; but it still remains the year of the Economic Crisis.

Though differing largely from the political crises of subsequent years, there is no mistaking, even in retrospect, the gravity of the events of that year. Then a public, which had been persuaded that the old economic laws no longer applied, saw them take their revenge upon the new theories which had temporarily displaced them. The effect of the economic crisis, which overwhelmed the world in the summer of 1931, was to alter the stress of national development compared with that of the preceding decade. In the 1920's, as we have seen, there had been leisure and opportunity to turn to the work of constructing a post-War society on a durable basis which would afford the best possible way of life for the mass of men and women in the country. With this work Mr. Chamberlain had been fortunate enough to be closely identified by reason of his position as Minister of Health through the greater part of the decade. The economic crisis of 1931 made it clear that a narrower view must be taken

for some years to come. The ample vision of building up a superior structure of society must be deferred to the imperative business of rehabilitating the nation's finances. With this work again Mr. Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was to be primarily associated. He was cast for the role of senior physician in the difficult and delicate task of steering the nation through its economic convalescence.

It would not be within the scope of this book to attempt to add anything to the abundant analyses of the financial difficulties of 1931, which are available to the student. It is however generally agreed that the economic crisis, viewed in its most universal aspect, represented the failure of post-War statesmanship and financial practice to adapt post-War economy to the realities of the situation. The free play of trade and enterprise was impeded by the vast network of international debt and Reparations, which exercised a stranglehold over the ordinary processes of trade and commerce. There was not, it is true, any very general desire on the part of the debtor nations to meet their obligations in full. At the same time even a genuine desire to do so would have been singularly difficult to translate into effect. International debts had to be paid in gold, since the high protective tariff, which was part of the internal economy of the United States, as chief creditor nation, rendered impossible the discharge of debt by payment in goods. The consequence was that gold tended to accumulate in the creditor nations with the result that by June 1931 60 per cent of the world's gold supply was concentrated in the United States and in France. In a world, which still adhered to the Gold Standard, such a one-sided accumulation of gold was bound in the end to impose undue strain upon the system. So in the summer of 1931 it

turned out. The first signals of distress went up from the comparatively small economic entity of Austria. These were followed however, almost at once by unmistakable evidence that the German financial system was once again on the verge of chaos. By July it was clear that the worst fears were realized, and that a world economic crisis was at hand.

The exact extent to which the British economic crisis of 1931 was attributable to world conditions has always been, and will presumably remain, a matter of political controversy. It is abundantly clear, however, that apart from the world position a severe *malaise* had attacked British economic dealing. The Socialist administration persisted in their adherence to the comfortable economic doctrine that the best way of creating wealth is to spend money. Early in 1931 it became clear to those who had eyes to see that Nemesis was stalking the carefree dealings of the Socialist Government. At this stage they themselves seem to have felt but little concern at the prospect: and it was with an almost grudging nonchalance that in February they agreed to the request of the Liberals to set up an expert non-political committee to inquire into the true state of the nation's finances. The body thus appointed was to become famous as the May Committee.

To others, of a more orthodox attitude towards financial questions, the signs were more easily read and consequently more ominous. Among these was Mr. Chamberlain, who on the 14th of April relinquished his position as Chairman of the Conservative Party Organization, having succeeded in restoring unity to the Party on the question of Protection and Empire Preference, which was left vacant by the secession of Mr. Churchill. His election to this position clearly foreshadowed his appointment to the Exchequer in the event of the Conservative Party

being again returned to office. It meant, too, that he became the chief official spokesman of the Conservative Opposition when matters of finance were under discussion in the House of Commons. It early became clear to him, who was by training and instinct orthodox in questions of finance, that the position was likely to deteriorate with great rapidity unless some effective halt was called. At the end of the Parliamentary session therefore he rose in his place in Parliament to ask Mr. Snowden, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to give "an indication of his attitude towards this position of seriousness and gravity." He reinforced his request by pointing out that national expenditure was exceeding national income and that British credit abroad was in consequence declining. He urged that salvation could only be found by reduction in national expenditure.

His observations were most powerfully reinforced on the following day by the publication of the *Report of the May Committee*. The Report stated quite unmistakably that public expenditure was too high, and that the nation was living beyond its means. If the existing basis was retained there would, according to the Report, be a deficit of £120 million in the next Budget. A large number of Socialist Members of Parliament, and even many members of the Government, were inclined to view this state of affairs with a measure of equanimity. The Prime Minister, however, with Mr. Snowden and certain other members of the Government, appreciated that matters could not be allowed to continue unchecked. Certain proposals were therefore made with regard to cuts in national expenditure, which were however rejected by the preponderant elements of the Labour Party. This imposed upon Mr. MacDonald the necessity of seeking a coalition, and discussions were initiated between him and those

of his colleagues who thought as he did, on the one hand, and leading Conservatives and Liberals on the other. Mr. Chamberlain as one of the inner hierarchy of the Conservative Party, and as Chancellor designate, took a leading part in these discussions, which resulted in the Conservatives agreeing to participate in a National Government on the understanding that a reduction in national expenditure was to be a cardinal feature of its policy. When Mr. MacDonald, as a result of these discussions, formed his National Government Mr. Chamberlain figured in the small Cabinet of ten in his old position as Minister of Health. Mr. Snowden was to continue as Chancellor and to introduce an immediate Budget to give effect to the economies considered necessary.

Mr. Snowden introduced his special Budget on the 10th of September, when he estimated a deficit of £74 millions, which he computed would increase, on the existing basis, to £170 millions. To meet this he introduced a Draconian Budget, imposing considerable increases in taxation and severe cuts in the pay of administrative officials as well as in unemployment benefit. These steps having been taken, it became necessary for the Cabinet to go to the country and ask for a vote of confidence in the new National Government. This was given by an unprecedented majority, and Mr. MacDonald was faced with the difficult task of Cabinet-making. Mr. Snowden had already let it be known that he did not desire a position which entailed direct administrative duties, and he was appointed Lord Privy Seal. This left the Exchequer vacant, and to it Mr. Chamberlain was duly appointed.

The Exchequer stands nominally second in importance to the Premiership. In fact, of course, the circumstances of the time may make some other office, such as the Foreign Secretaryship, of more

importance. At the time of Mr. Chamberlain's appointment, however, there could be no doubt that the Chancellorship was as important in practice as it was in traditional precedence. The central problems were economic, and revolved round the simple issue: could Great Britain recover from the blow which had struck her? And if so, how soon?

To these problems Mr. Chamberlain had given much patient inquiry. It was clear to him that just as the causes of the catastrophe were partly of universal origin, and partly attributable to national circumstances, so the remedies must be sought partly through world initiative and partly through our own national action. In the former category stood such matters as the settlement of international War Debts and the restoration of the Gold Standard, in which he continued to believe as the ultimate financial desideratum, and of international lending. In such questions as these the statesman responsible for guiding the economic policy of Great Britain could hope only to influence world action by wise precept and suitable example.

For the rest there was much that could be done by national action. In particular Mr. Chamberlain realized that there were two factors militating against the revival of industrial prosperity. In the first place there was the system of free imports, which left the industrialist without any protection in the home market even against subsidized foreign imports or those produced under sweated conditions, against which it was not reasonable to expect a British manufacturer to compete on equal terms. It was not only the Home Market however, in which the system of one-sided free trade then existing left the British manufacturer at a disadvantage; he was placed at a disadvantage also in the Export Market, for, since a system of unlimited free trade applied

in Great Britain, there was little or no inducement for foreign nations to give a tariff abatement by way of most-favoured-nation clause or the like. With regard to this, the name of Chamberlain at the Exchequer was a sufficient promise of ameliorative action; for Mr. Chamberlain is, as he has claimed for himself, "a Protectionist by heredity as well as by conviction." Another factor which was exercising a retarding influence upon industrial progress was the burden of interest on gilt-edged securities, which not only had to be discharged ultimately out of the proceeds of industry, but which inevitably attracted capital away from its proper function of financing the operation of industry. If solutions could be found for these two problems, and if machinery could be devised whereby a more stable sphere of trade could be secured by means of Empire agreements, Mr. Chamberlain saw that the path to industrial recovery would be opened up. And he regarded industrial recovery as the indispensable prerequisite for the revival of financial confidence. He was not impressed and it was not in his nature nor in his training to be impressed, by unorthodox short-cuts to financial revival, which were eagerly canvassed by the impatient and the optimistic.

Decisive action was in fact taken along both these two lines of advance within the first twelve months of Mr. Chamberlain's tenure of office at the Exchequer. It was universally assumed that the National Government would introduce some sort of Protectionist system, and undoubtedly the great majority of the nation, shaken by events out of its complacent acquiescence in Free Trade in a world of high Protection, was prepared to welcome innovations along these lines. It was felt too to be peculiarly appropriate that it should fall to the lot of a Chamberlain to introduce the measures that marked the adoption

of that system of Protection for which Joseph Chamberlain had campaigned in such arduous and difficult circumstances. There is no doubt too that this aspect of the matter appealed strongly to Mr. Chamberlain himself, in whom filial affection and family feeling were strongly marked, and who has always regarded his political work as being to some extent the fulfilment of the tasks to which his father had set his hand. It was therefore with something more than a mere political satisfaction that Mr. Chamberlain introduced into the House of Commons on the 4th of February 1932 a resolution whereby a 10 per cent *ad valorem* duty—subject to exemption in special cases and to increase in case of luxury products—was imposed on foreign imports. The effect of this measure, which marked the transition of Great Britain from a Free Trade to a Protectionist country, was the dual one of putting a brake on excessive foreign competition and of giving a substantial and much-needed aid to the national revenue.

The success of the Protectionist experiment provoked in the more superficial observers a facile and somewhat unreasoning optimism. Against this the new Chancellor set his face, for he was convinced that economic recovery was only likely to be achieved if the nation as a whole, and particularly those who guided its economic destinies, were prepared resolutely to face the facts which existed. With this in mind he made a speech of warning in Birmingham in March of 1932 pointing out that, although progress was abundantly satisfactory, the country had as yet reached only the first stages of a long and difficult journey. It is significant that this speech was made only three days after Mr. Baldwin had delivered himself in optimistic vein at Ilford, upon which some people had perhaps unjustifiably begun to build up

hopes of substantial concessions in the Budget. Those who entertained such hopes—and there were many—were doomed to disappointment when Mr. Chamberlain introduced his Budget on the 19th of April. Although he had first been Chancellor of the Exchequer nine years earlier, this was in fact the first Budget which it had fallen to him to introduce. It came, as he said, at the end of a year “of anxiety, difficulty, and hardship, relieved only by a glimmer of hope at the end.” He was able to announce that he could raise nearly £75 millions from the new Revenue Duties to meet what would otherwise have been a financial deficit.

Though this was encouraging for the future, in no respect did the Chancellor see fit to ease the burden imposed by Mr. Snowden's Budget of six months previously. This was undoubtedly an attitude which was dictated by the necessity of the time; nor had Mr. Chamberlain by word or deed afforded any justification for the hopes which were entertained of Budgetary relief. Some of the optimists would have felt more inclined to forgive what they considered to be the negative aspect of his Budget if he had condescended to sugar the pill with assurances of imminent relief. This Mr. Chamberlain would not do. True to his policy of facing the facts and of setting them before his audience without elaboration or adornment, he delivered his Budget speech in dry, almost flat tones, which many felt were more suited to a shareholders' meeting than to a Budget speech in Parliament. In this initial Budget effort he set the tone of his subsequent Budget speeches, and adhered to his unexciting presentation of the facts, even when in subsequent Budgets he had more pleasant news to offer.

One unexpected innovation was made by his 1932 Budget, technical in character but of far-reaching

importance. This was the setting up of the Exchange Equalization Fund. The object of this was to stabilize the exchange in order to meet sudden withdrawals of gold or short-call capital, and generally to act as a check on speculation. The need for some such machinery had been abundantly proved by the experience of the crisis period, and the proof of its efficacy was to lie in the future.

Meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain had not lost sight of the desirability of reducing the overhead burden of interest and facilitating the flow of capital into the channels of industry. The most likely method of achieving this objective was by the use of conversion operations, and early in June Mr. Chamberlain hinted in the House of Commons that he had in mind the conversion of the 5 per cent War Loan. The bulk of June he spent at Lausanne engaged in the Reparations Conference, which was endeavouring to reach a final settlement of the Reparations question. On his return he announced that the 5 per cent War Loan would be converted, so as to bear interest at only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Earlier in the day of his announcement the way had been paved by the reduction of the Bank Rate to 2 per cent. This figure, which represented the lowest rate for thirty-five years, inaugurated a policy of cheap money which was designed to facilitate the financing of industrial enterprise. Holders of the 5 per cent War Loan were given the alternative of converting into the new $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent or redeeming their stock. The success of the operation can be seen from the fact that about 92 per cent converted to the lower figure leaving only 8 per cent of the stock to be redeemed. The result of this was a saving of between £20 and £30 million per annum. It had the further effect of encouraging other conversion operations with the result that in the course of 1932 five in all

were carried through at a total saving of £40 million annually to the Exchequer. Apart from the saving, the success of these various conversion operations showed a spirit of confidence and willingness on the part of the public investor, which reacted in turn on the Stock Exchange and industrial investment, where it worked as a stimulating and much-needed tonic.

Between the announcement of the conversion of War Loan and the full success of the operation, Mr. Chamberlain had set sail for Canada as a member of the Ottawa Delegation. It was not the policy of the Government, nor was it part of the Chamberlain creed to reply merely on the negative or domestic aspects of Protection. The full creed of Protection envisaged its use as an instrument for developing an Imperial Zollverein which would be a closely united unit for trade purposes. Indeed one of the strongest elements in Joseph Chamberlain's condemnation of Free Trade had been its inability to allow of the adoption of any system of close Imperial collaboration in matters of trade. This disability the National Government proposed to remove by the exercise of their discretion with regard to tariffs. Ottawa was fixed as the scene of the Imperial Economic Conference, and thither Mr. Chamberlain sailed before the rising of Parliament in July of 1932. The general results of the Conference are too well known to require any repetition here. Suffice it to say that the work of the Delegation was a success, which was to be measured as Mr. Chamberlain himself always insisted, not so much by its precise and immediate achievements, though these were considerable, as in the possibilities of the future. Two years later Mr. Chamberlain returned to this subject with the words: "The real value of Ottawa lay not so much in the particular advantages we obtained at the time in the

reduction of tariffs as in the fact that, when the great countries of the Empire sat down round the table together, they found that every one of them was able to obtain considerable benefits from trade agreements with the others." Another two years showed concrete advantages of the Ottawa Agreement in no uncertain or hypothetical way. For, when the trade slump began to set in in 1937, that part of British trade which felt its influence least was the Empire trade which had grown up on the secure foundations of the Agreement entered into at Ottawa.

The Ottawa Delegation comprised various Cabinet Ministers, including Mr. Baldwin as head of the Delegation and Mr. Runciman, who was one of the Liberals who had become converted to a system of Protection. But the most interesting member of the party from the point of view of the future was not a Cabinet Minister, but one of the experts who accompanied the Delegation. This was Sir Horace Wilson, at that time Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Labour. Sir Horace had been prominently engaged with Lord Askwith, Chairman of the Industrial Arbitration Court, in the settlement of industrial disputes, and he was taken to Ottawa, for it was felt that his skill and experience in negotiation would be of considerable value. So indeed it appeared, for Sir Horace was a man of indefatigable industry, who did not spare himself in his labours to assist in the evolution of a satisfactory agreement. This quality of unobtrusive industry appealed greatly to Mr. Baldwin since he was himself deficient in application and it was clearly of value to have a man like Sir Horace to lend his willing assistance. So Sir Horace became a power at No. 10 Downing Street with the official position of Chief Industrial Adviser to the Government. What was not fully realized at the time was that not only had his industry commended itself to

Mr. Baldwin who did not share in it; it had also attracted the admiring notice of Mr. Chamberlain, who was ready to admire a virtue which reflected one of his own qualities. The part played by Sir Horace Wilson was to loom large in the future, though perhaps he was never to attain the same incontrovertible success as attended his efforts at Ottawa.

The success attending the conversion operations and the policy of Protection aroused again the impatience of those who were anxious to forget the existence of economic difficulty and to take a short cut to the full restoration of prosperity. Strong pressure was brought to bear in the early months of 1933 with a view to a reduction of taxation. Representations were made to the Chancellor that the beneficial effect upon industry of a reduction of taxation would be such as to offset any minor inconveniences which might attend an unbalanced Budget. Mr. Chamberlain however was not looking for a policy of short cuts. He adhered to the view that ultimate economic revival must be sought along the path of orthodox finance, however stern and unwelcome might be some of the incidents attaching to it. To the disappointment of many therefore, but to the relief no doubt of most, the 1933 Budget was a balanced Budget; and the price for balancing it was paid in the retention of taxation at its existing level. Some months later Mr. Chamberlain defended his attitude in a speech made at a dinner given in his honour by the Lord Mayor of London. "People," he said, "who in ordinary times were foremost in demanding that the Government should mind its own business and cease to interfere with their private affairs were apt to turn round and inquire 'What is the Government doing about it?' Such people were disposed to exhibit notions at such a time which

in other days they would consider fantastic. They call for the abandonment of orthodox methods; and they require that the Government should adopt what was called in public affairs imaginative finance, although, of course, in private transactions that generally went by a shorter and less agreeable title. That is all very well for people without responsibility for what might follow, but the Government of an old country like ours must be very sure that the old principles have really failed before we abandon them, and that the new experiments are really likely to succeed before we venture to embark on them."

The creed of Protection is sometimes represented as narrow and insular, and it is not unusual for its critics to accuse its disciples of lack of proper appreciation of universal economic considerations. Normally it would be truer to say that the Protectionist, while fully appreciating the significance of world considerations, realizes that too often his powers of remedial action are restricted to matters which can be regulated by the economic policy of his own country. So it was in the case of Mr. Chamberlain. He went out of his way on many occasions during his years at the Exchequer to show that he had given considerable thought to the world economic position. He declared plainly in December 1932, in the course of a speech at Birmingham to the National Union of Manufacturers, that "Tariffs must not be treated as a patent medicine capable of curing every industrial ill, for there are diseases for which Tariffs are no remedy." The World Economic Conference, which engrossed a fair amount of Mr. Chamberlain's time during the summer of 1933, afforded Mr. Chamberlain, as spokesman of the British Government an opportunity of putting his views on universal economic questions. In the forefront of the objectives he placed a recovery in

the world level of wholesale commodity prices so as to give an economic return to producers of primary commodities. Other points which he considered of vital importance were monetary reforms, the resumption of international lending and of an international monetary standard; as for reduction of tariffs he considered that the most practical method of achieving this was by means of bilateral agreements containing the most-favoured-nation clause. The World Economic Conference like so many of the grandiose conferences of the post-War period, had from a practical point of view to be written off as a failure. There were certain urgent problems for which some solution however had to be found. Notable among these were the protracted and difficult problems of international reparations and the War Debts.

As regards War Debts, Great Britain was in a middle position being a creditor on a large scale, and, as regards the United States, a considerable debtor. Mr. Chamberlain took the view that the best thing that could happen for the world as a whole was a total cancellation of War Debts and Reparations. While this point of view was enthusiastically endorsed by the debtor nations, it could hardly be a matter of surprise that it received less universal and unqualified acceptance in the great creditor nation of the United States. Throughout the early period of the Chancellorship Mr. Chamberlain was occupied with efforts and negotiations directed to a successful issue from the difficulties of the situation created by War Debts and Reparations. To some extent success attended these efforts with regard to the countries in relation to which Great Britain stood as a creditor. There remained the problem of the American Debt, which the economic circumstances of the early 1930's made it impossible for Great

Britain to settle in full on the terms arranged by Mr. Baldwin as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1923. In fact the course taken was for Great Britain to make what were called "token" payments. Two such payments were made in silver, one in June and one in December of 1933. In May of the following year however the United States offered what was practically an alternative of payment in full or the stigma of default. Faced with this, the British Government decided to make no more token payments, but to defer all payment till it was possible to discuss inter-governmental War Debts with some reasonable prospect of agreement.

This issue of the American Debt discussions can hardly be ranked as better than a *pis aller*. In the United States the view is widely, and not unreasonably, held that Great Britain defaulted on her War Debts. In fact however, it is difficult to see what alternative course could have been taken. To Mr. Chamberlain as a representative of orthodox finance and as a man of punctilious scruples in his own business dealings, the notion of default was necessarily repugnant. Since the ideal of total cancellation did not appear to be practicable, he would have wished to be the instrument of discharging the British obligation to the United States in full. This unfortunately was impossible; and certain aspects of the matter appeared to him to entitle Great Britain to consideration at the hands of the United States. Chief among these was the fact that, although the British share of the total indebtedness to the United States was only 40 per cent, 80 per cent of what had actually been paid up to November 1932 was contributed by Great Britain. Further the American Tariff had adversely affected Anglo-American trade, and the burden of indebtedness was increased by the depreciation of sterling in terms of gold.



CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

Neville Chamberlain photographed in April 1937 at No. 11 Downing Street just prior to presenting his last Budget to Parliament, thus completing his historic Chancellorship before succeeding Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister. This Budget contained the ill-fated N.D.C. proposals. At Mr. Chamberlain's side is the famous Budget Box used by successive Chancellors.

The failure to find a satisfactory agreement on the question of the American Debt was a rare instance of failure on the part of the Exchequer in the early 1930's. In the main Mr. Chamberlain's policy was abundantly justified in its results. The 1934 Budget showed that the economic corner had been turned at last. In Mr. Chamberlain's own words in his Budget speech on the 17th of April, "We have finished the story of Bleak House, and are sitting down to the first chapter of Great Expectations." The emergence was marked by a rise in wholesale prices, an increase in industrial production together with new confidence bred of the general economic improvement. The Chancellor found himself with a surplus of £29 million, which he used for restoring half the cuts imposed by Mr. Snowden's 1931 Budget, and for removing once more the increase of sixpence in the rate of Income Tax which had been made at the same time.

Despite the appearance of external problems in a form damaging to business confidence the upward tendency continued steadily. The 1935 Budget, the fourth introduced by Mr. Chamberlain, provided a further justification of his Conservative policy with regard to finance and further evidence of the strengthening of the economic position. In introducing this Budget he was able to announce that there had been a 12 per cent increase in manufacturing production, and that the level of exports had increased by £30 millions. This year he had an £11 millions surplus, which he used in part for the restoration of the remainder of the cuts and in part for concessions to the small income tax payer. Less than four years after the country had encountered the full force of economic crisis he was able to declare with pardonable pride: "We have recovered 80 per cent of our prosperity." What were the reasons? Tariffs, con-

version operations, cheap money, balanced budgets, and remission of taxation; in pursuing these remedies and thus arriving at so satisfactory a position the country had undoubtedly much cause to thank its Chancellor. But Mr. Chamberlain was the first to admit the extent of the debt in which he stood to the British people, whose patience, steadiness, and patriotism had made possible the means and had justified the result.

The peak of British industrial and commercial revival was reached in the last year of Mr. Chamberlain's Chancellorship in 1936. In that Budget there was no remission of taxation, however, because the requirements of the Services were receiving belated and imperative attention.

The position attained in 1936 and at the beginning of 1937 could hardly be held in face of the international stress. It seems in retrospect as if the economic clouds had scarcely rolled back before the outlook was again darkened by the more menacing thunderclouds of international difficulty and prospect of war. Economic achievements have taken second place in the public mind, having yielded their former priority to the insistent claim of foreign affairs. In the present situation people are inclined to take very much for granted the economic power of this country, as compared with that of its potential challengers. They are inclined to take as a matter of course the vast financial resources which have enabled a nation, while substantially retaining the ordinary structure of its daily life, to put forward so vast an effort in the creation of armaments. And yet it is the same nation which only a few years ago was unable to balance its Budget and was seeking desperately for means of reducing the national expenditure and thus preserving intact the shaken structure of the national credit. It is salutary to remember perhaps

that the economic power which has enabled this vast effort to be made was not a thing which inherently and inalienably belonged to Britain. It was a power which had to be won and to be redeemed from the very jaws of destruction. It was a position which could only have been attained by the patience, the perseverance and the faith which marked the direction of British economic policy in the first half of the present decade.

PERSONAL TASTES AND CHARACTERISTICS

MR. CHAMBERLAIN once remarked that he was conscious of his deficiencies as a newspaper subject. He did not smoke any particular kind of pipe or wear any particular kind of hat, and even his name did not readily lend itself to an affectionate diminutive.

There were probably reasons more profound than these to account for the fact that through the greater part of his career the public did not take Mr. Chamberlain very warmly to its bosom. It has already been pointed out that he is almost wholly deficient in showmanship, and a poor rhetorician. In addition to this he came late into public life; and the British public like to have a long time to get to know those whom it makes its favourites. These things added to a somewhat metallic manner, prevented Mr. Chamberlain from occupying a high place in the affections, as distinct from the regard, of his fellow-citizens. It is only comparatively recently that people have paused to consider the man behind the minister.

Mr. Chamberlain, as we have seen, is the plain man in politics. This is unfortunate for Mr. Chamberlain, as this role had already been wrongfully appropriated, and exploited to considerable advantage, by Mr. Baldwin. Now Mr. Baldwin was not the plain man in politics, for he had what Mr. Chamberlain has not, a genuine streak of poetry in

him. Mr. Baldwin was the political interpreter of the plain man. He had the gift, dangerous as well as attractive, of interpreting and presenting in a good light the weaknesses as well as the strength of his fellow countrymen.

It is perhaps this which caused Professor Ernest Barker to say that Mr. Chamberlain is less of the English type than Mr. Baldwin. Mr. Chamberlain has certainly a relentless insistence on the limitations of facts as against the inspiration of words. His is the hard-headed, clear-sighted type of mind, which English business men think that they possess, but in fact so rarely do. His politics are based on practicality rather than on poetry; on the desire for definite achievement rather than on the indulgence of sentiment. It is not a far cry from such a political attitude to the likeness of the narrow and unsympathetic man of affairs, in which Mr. Chamberlain has been so often represented.

This idea of Mr. Chamberlain has been greatly strengthened by an almost complete ignorance, at least until a short time ago, as to his tastes and habits in private life. This is due in part to his disinclination to capitalize his private tastes, a disinclination which is becoming increasingly unfashionable amongst successful politicians. Coming, as he did, late into public life by way of municipal administration, it did not occur to Mr. Chamberlain that his private life was a thing to be shared with the public. Nor was it until he was nearly seventy years of age that in any sense he found himself the real centre of the stage. He is, as has already been pointed out, essentially a normal man, and the clue to his tastes lies in their simplicity. He has always taken an almost child-like pleasure in simple things, and simple pastimes, and this he retains even in the seventies. He has the reputation of being somewhat aloof and

difficult of approach and conversation. This is due primarily to the fact that less than almost any other public man does he mix public with private life.

In private Mr. Chamberlain is an easy conversationalist, and presents no formidable difficulties to the ordinary individual. Indeed there is no reason why he should, for he is not what is known as a brilliant talker. That is to say, he is not a wit nor an intellectual in the sense in which that term is generally understood. In fact Mr. Chamberlain, like Mr. Bonar Law, is rather out of the conventional line of British Premiers, who on the whole have been of a literary—and sometimes even a philosophic—turn. He no doubt had this in mind himself when he remarked that it was perhaps fortunate for him that Prime Ministers are not marked off in order of merit according to their own contributions to literature, adding “If they were, I should come out at the bottom of the list.” This was perhaps an unduly modest assessment, for Mr. Bonar Law and one or two others would no doubt rank below him in the hypothetical list. But it illustrates the general truth that his speeches are not distinguished for their literary or philosophic content. Nor is he a man of wide general reading in the sense that Mr. Asquith, Mr. Gladstone or even Mr. Baldwin was. There was a praiseworthy attempt on the part of certain sections of the Press, which evidently believed literary pretensions to be an indispensable adjunct of Premiership, to represent him at one time as a literary man. Indeed it was suggested that he goes about with a volume of Shakespeare in his pocket. There was no truth in this suggestion, which was in fact a somewhat unimaginative and infelicitous adaptation of the true story that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald sometimes took volumes of poetry on his aeroplane

journeys; though how much even that literary gentleman managed to read of them on such occasions is a matter of legitimate speculation.

The truth is in regard to Mr. Chamberlain as it is with many other busy men. As a boy he read in the manner of intelligent boys, extensively and fairly at large. With the passing of the years and the encroaching demands of affairs of State his reading has grown somewhat limited and specialized. It is a chastening, but none the less an accurate, reflection that it is provably impossible for a Prime Minister in modern times to discharge his duties conscientiously and to be a man of wide general reading. This fact Mr. Chamberlain has by implication recognized himself. "One of the things," he remarked, "about which I have to pick a bone with the dictators is that they leave me so little time for reading. Every day of the week they have been making speeches, and I cannot read for twenty minutes without a visitor coming in and saying 'He has done it again.' "

Nevertheless, Mr. Chamberlain does find time for an occasional perusal of the works of Shakespeare, and for a little general reading. In this his taste inclines to the romantic, and he has a preference for the works of Conrad and the elder Dumas. Poetry he does not and cannot read, in which he is probably representative of 90 per cent of the present generation of Englishmen. He has not manifested any inclination towards literary creation, and his speeches do not reveal the sensitiveness to the magic of words, which are to be found for instance in the speeches of Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Churchill.

In fact Mr. Chamberlain's own tastes lie more in the direction of music than of literature. As a young man he was himself something of a performer, and used to entertain his family and friends in those far-off Victorian days when families and friends were

entertained by amateur effort. The taste for music is also curtailed in its indulgence by the more imperious, if less welcome, summons of public affairs. He has, however, like Herr Hitler, shown that even in times of crisis he can still take pleasure in and derive comfort from music. Indeed he visited Glyndebourne during one of the critical week-ends of the present summer, where his presence was loudly cheered by his fellow music-lovers. His favourite composer is Beethoven. Whether this is exemplified by his political characteristics as clearly as is Herr Hitler's preference for Wagner by his political characteristics, I leave to students of Beethoven to decide.

But perhaps Mr. Chamberlain's chief tastes, outside of his work, lie in the open air. Though he retains for the most part an urban political outlook, he is more rural in his tastes than either his father or his brother. The popular conception of Joseph Chamberlain was of a man who never took exercise. This is in fact an exaggeration, but it is true to say that Neville Chamberlain is the most physically active of the Chamberlain trio. His physical activity is partly due to, and partly the cause of, the robustness of his constitution. It is perhaps unnecessary to refer to this, as it is clearly evidenced by the way in which at an age when many men are seeking relief from their heavier and more responsible duties he has borne the anxious burden of the last two years. His diet is sensible but not self-denying, and he has few of the fads of the rulers of modern Europe. He has what is invaluable to a statesman, the ability to sleep even at times of stress; this he exemplified by taking a nap in the train on his first and historic journey to see Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden. He has also the converse and equally necessary quality of being able to do with very little sleep if the

exigencies of his work do not allow him time for the normal amount.

The amount of his exercise, as in the case of most statesmen, is necessarily limited. He has on the whole however continued to adhere to the practice of the "British week-end," which never ceases to cause surprise on the Continent. His favourite outdoor sports are shooting and fishing. As far as shooting is concerned, he is what can perhaps be classified as a good average political shot. He still takes a keen delight in the pleasures of shooting, into the practice of which he inducted himself so laboriously and so conscientiously in his leave from the Bahamas nearly fifty years ago. Fishing, however, has ousted shooting from first place in his sporting affections. Though now a good fisherman, he did not take to the piscatorial art until later in life. When he was first a Member of Parliament he went up to stay during the summer recess at the local hotel at Rannoch in North Perthshire. Here there was good rough shooting and fishing for salmon in the river Tummell. So much did he like this form of holiday that later he used to take a house at Rannoch for August with about a thousand acres. Here he indulged his taste for shooting and became an expert fisherman. He was very popular in Rannoch, where he was thought of not as a Minister of the Crown, but as the man who was likely to be able to give without hesitation a name to any rare bird or flower that might be encountered in the countryside.

In these days Mr. Chamberlain takes every opportunity of getting some fishing. He was for instance the guest of Lord Forbes in Scotland for Easter of 1939, when he was recalled by news of the Italian invasion of Albania. In Whitsun of the same year he fished with his friend Sir Francis Lindley, former Ambassador to Tokio, in the river Weir at Alresford

in Hampshire—a holiday which he can remember as uninterrupted, even if short. There is no doubt that fishing is a suitable recreation for a statesman, for in the public mind it affords opportunities for contemplation which are denied to more hectic sports and pastimes. Like most hobbies however it can lend itself to unkind comment. Thus I remember being told of an exceptionally good catch that had been made by Mr. Chamberlain. On expressing suitable gratification, I was met with the unexpected rejoinder: "Yes, it must be nice to catch something after having been caught himself so often."

In London Mr. Chamberlain relies upon his now famous morning walk in St. James's Park for exercise. In this he is invariably accompanied by Mrs. Chamberlain. It gives him an opportunity to indulge in what is perhaps his main, and certainly his least usual, outdoor taste, that of bird watching. In this patient and difficult exercise I am given to understand that Mr. Chamberlain ranks really high among his fellow devotees. Certain it is that it has been with him a life-long source of pleasure, practised with intermission from the days of ample schoolboy leisure to the scattered opportunities which is all that the duties of high office will grudgingly permit. Butterflies and moths exercise a similar attraction for him, and of these he has a fine collection. It is not true however, as is sometimes stated, that the West Indian butterfly *Terias Chamberlainii* is named after Mr. Chamberlain; it was in fact called after Mr. Chamberlain's young cousin, whose visit to the West Indies was referred to previously in this book.

Mr. Chamberlain has occasionally contributed articles on aspects of natural history or botany to various journals, including *The Countryman*. On one occasion many people, who regarded him in those days as a dry politician, occupied only with statistics,

were pleasantly surprised to read in the *Daily Telegraph* an account of the imitative habits of the black-bird written by Mr. Chamberlain when laid up with his old and ancestral enemy the gout. The sketch is so pleasant that I reproduce a part of it here:

"One of the pleasantest features of No. 11 Downing Street is its outlook on the old L-shaped garden that lies between it and the Horse Guards Parade, with its ancient shaded wall, its marvellous turf, and its venerable ilex and hawthorn. When I came to it first, it was midwinter: the trees, save the ilex, were leafless, the birds silent. Yet it was pleasant to look on and full of promise.

"As, later in the year, the spring brought up the sap and the green began to show in the tips of the lime-buds, the first sound that came through the open window of my bedroom in the morning was the song of a thrush. Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! he sang so joyously and vigorously that his exuberant spirits were infectious, and I got into the habit of listening for him in the daytime as well as in the early morning.

"It was only after a long time that I began to remark to myself that never had I heard a thrush put so little variety into its song. Thrushes generally repeat notes, often many times in succession, but then they will break off and improvise.

"Could it, I wondered, be a missel thrush? But no! there was none of that piercing, breathless phrasing of the storm-cock. This was clearly and decidedly a song thrush.

"I had never seen a thrush in the garden, though black-birds were often on the lawn and sometimes came to drink at my bird-bath. Could this be a blackbird which had picked up those two notes from a thrush singing in St. James's Park? I determined to solve the mystery by observation, but I had to wait long before I could find an opportunity.

"At last, one week-end in July, when I had to be in London, I was working in my room when I heard the well-known cry. I ran into the garden; the bird was concealed in the thick foliage of a plane-tree by the Foreign Office

steps. I waited patiently, motionless, on the lawn, and presently a shadow passed across the trees. 'Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho!' came from the interior of the plane opposite and in another minute the singer emerged at the very top of the tree, shouting out his little song of gladness.

"No mistake about it this time—a blackbird imitating the habit as well as the notes of the song thrush, and proud of his accomplishment.

"August has come and the blackbirds' song is ended. But I fancy that whenever in future my thoughts turn to the garden of No. 11 I shall hear again that 'Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho!'"

In his work Mr. Chamberlain has always been interested by his own methodical nature. He dictates slowly but without hesitation, and rarely has to amend the draft of what he has written. His normal practice as Chancellor of the Exchequer was to attend to his own correspondence and private affairs at nine o'clock each morning in his study in 11 Downing Street. This concluded, he would take his morning walk in St. James's Park and from there go on to the Treasury, arriving at the House of Commons later in the afternoon. As Prime Minister he has a staff of four private secretaries, who are Treasury officials. In addition to these he has of course his Parliamentary private secretary, who at the time of writing is Lord Dunglass, son of his friend the Earl of Home and himself chairman of the Imperial League. Mr. Chamberlain has not however a special or permanent private secretary of his own acting in a similar capacity to that in which Sir Geoffrey Fry served Mr. Baldwin. In point of fact Mr. Chamberlain, who is temperamentally inclined to do as much of his own work as possible, probably stands in less need of assistance than his predecessor. For his speeches, even those which are in reality not addressed so much to the immediate

and visible audience, as to statesmen in foreign countries, Mr. Chamberlain makes do with a compact little sheaf of neatly written notes; he has not yet succumbed to the practice, which appears to be growing to-day but which would have earned considerable censure from a previous generation of politicians, of reading his speeches verbatim from a carefully drafted manuscript.

When Mr. MacDonald resigned the Premiership in favour of Mr. Baldwin, the Chamberlains were able to move into No. 11 Downing Street, the traditional home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which up to that time had been occupied by Mr. Baldwin as Lord Privy Seal. Here Mr. Chamberlain continued to live until some time after he first became Prime Minister, on account of the reconstructions which were then being carried out at No. 10. In point of fact No. 11 is probably the pleasanter house of the two. No. 11 dates from the reign of Charles II. It was indeed a gift from the Merry Monarch, made by him on the occasion of her marriage, to a daughter with whom he had been presented by Lady Castlemaine. The records go to show that he exhibited a paternal interest in the house even to the extent of bringing his royal attention to bear on the vexed question of repairing the roof.

Previous to going to Downing Street Mr. Chamberlain had lived at 72 Eaton Square, which had been his first and only London town house. When it became reasonably certain that he would be spending a few years in Downing Street, he disposed of the Eaton Square house. It is his intention, on quitting office, to live in the country and not to keep a London house. In addition to his London house Mr. Chamberlain has for many years had a house in Westbourne Avenue, Birmingham, where he used to live in the days of his business and municipal activities there.

Of this house very little use is now made, and the Chamberlains stayed there for the first time for some considerable period for the purposes of a family reunion in the early part of the summer of 1939.

Mr. Chamberlain has of course extensive ties, family and sentimental, with Birmingham. His only son, who has so far shown little inclination for politics, is engaged in business in Birmingham. His daughter Dorothy is married to Mr. Stephen Lloyd, a member of a well-known Birmingham family, and also lives in Birmingham, where she presented Mr. Chamberlain with his first grandchild in the dark days of the September crisis of 1938. His cousin Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, whose guest he sometimes is for shooting, maintains the other side of the Chamberlain family tradition by being one of the leading members of the Birmingham industrial community. Mr. Chamberlain's sisters however, like himself, have deserted Birmingham from the point of view of domicile, and are now jointly installed in a pleasant house with extensive gardens, which lies in a backwater just off the main road of Odiham in Hampshire. There Miss Ida Chamberlain maintains the family tradition of municipal administration by serving on the Hampshire County Council, on which she used appropriately enough, to be chairman of the Public Health and Housing Committee. To Odiham Mr. Chamberlain sometimes goes for a quiet family week-end. Indeed Hampshire is a favourite resort of Mr. Chamberlain for recreational purposes, for in addition to Odiham and Sir Francis Lindley's place at Alresford, he is also from time to time the guest of Major Mills, the Conservative member for New Forest and Christchurch.

A necessary element of interest in a review of any man who has held the position of Prime Minister at the culmination of a considerable career in politics,

is the financial aspect. In the nineteenth century it went without saying that every Prime Minister, of whatever party, was a man of means—always excepting the brilliant figure, who was a law unto himself and whom his friends enabled to live as if he was a man of means. In the twentieth century Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman were men of means; Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Baldwin were both men with comfortable fortunes derived from industry; Mr. Lloyd George became rich through journalism, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was looked after by the generosity of his friends. The remaining Prime Minister Mr. Asquith, felt the pinch in trying to discharge his official duties on the remuneration afforded him by the State. What has been Mr. Chamberlain's position in this regard? He has been fortunate in various respects in the course of his official career. In the first place his has been to an extent unusual in a politician in a parliamentary democracy an official career. Within four years of his election to Parliament he was appointed to salaried office, and has continued to hold a salaried position continuously except for about three years. He has further been fortunate in that before his appointment to the Premiership the salary of the Prime Minister had been raised to £10,000 a year. What of Mr. Chamberlain's financial position apart from this? He would not rank as a rich man according to the standards of Conservative politicians, but he has been comfortably off. He had little opportunity of making money before his return to Birmingham from the West Indies just before the turn of the century. Then followed the period of his association with Elliotts, Hodgkin's, Birmingham Small Arms, and so on. The period of his business activity was not long however, being curtailed by municipal work, the directorate of National Service and

membership of Parliament, and finally terminated by ministerial office. However, he made a certain amount out of his business activities, and inherited a further sum of money under his father's will. During the bulk of his period of ministerial office I estimate that his private income would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of £2,000 and £3,000 a year. Even so, since he could hardly have anticipated so speedy an attainment of office nor so protracted and continuous a tenure thereof, Mr. Chamberlain might well hesitate, with the responsibilities of a family man, before virtually abandoning his business interests in order to devote himself to national politics with the consequent necessity of having an establishment in London. That he was able to do so with a free mind was due to the generosity of an elderly relative Sir George Kenrick, who was prepared to guarantee him, and who on his death in 1939 left him a sum in the neighbourhood of £25,000. It is right to say therefore that, though Mr. Chamberlain has not owed his position to his wealth, he has been at any rate agreeably free from economic care during the period of his public life.

Mr. Chamberlain was new to politics when he came into the House of Commons at the age of forty-nine. Mr. Bonar Law had set the precedent for successful manufacturers entering Parliament in middle life and going to the top of the tree. One result of entering upon the scene late in life was that Mr. Chamberlain was free from the embarrassment of a youthful record, upon which critics of his maturer years could base charges of political inconsistency. It also meant that he had no long association with any individual politician, always excepting of course his brother and some of the Birmingham Conservatives. In the Coalition Parliament he was known as a somewhat diffident back-bencher, and did not make



GUILDHALL LUNCHEON

Neville Chamberlain in conversation with Crown Prince Michael of Rumania at the luncheon given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London on the occasion of King Carol's state visit to England in November 1938.

any great mark or form any profound political attachments. There was however a sufficient similarity of background between Mr. Baldwin and himself to promote the possibility of sympathetic association. Mr. Chamberlain actually owed his first Ministerial appointment in part to a desire to include a Chamberlain in a government of which Mr. Austen Chamberlain was not a member. But when once the way had been opened to association between Mr. Baldwin and himself, there grew up, if not intimacy, at any rate a sympathy and understanding. Certain personal considerations assisted this development. Both were antipathetic towards Mr. Lloyd George, and both were held in very small esteem by him: Mr. Baldwin was considered by Mr. Lloyd George to be the least constructive element of his government, and Mr. Chamberlain was "a good Lord Mayor of Birmingham in a lean year." Both were distrustful of brilliance as a political quality, and neither thought it an easy quality in a colleague. Thus both were included in Lord Birkenhead's collection of "second-class brains"; and in later years neither fully appreciated Mr. Churchill, nor in turn was fully appreciated by him.

Mr. Chamberlain was consistently loyal to Mr. Baldwin, even, as we have seen, to assuming the ungrateful task of becoming chairman of the Party organization when Mr. Baldwin's leadership was being subjected to strong and not unreasonable criticism. Whether this loyalty in fact led Mr. Chamberlain into implicit approval of policies which he would have done better to disapprove is a matter which will be considered hereafter.

Consistently close to Mr. Chamberlain politically and personally has been Sir Kingsley Wood. Sir Kingsley Wood first came into political association with Mr. Chamberlain as Parliamentary Secretary

to the Ministry of Health. It proved an ideal political and departmental combination. Both men were able and industrious administrators, and both had behind them experience of men and affairs, the one in industry and the other in the law, in which practical experience Conservative ministers are too often deficient. Sir Kingsley has in addition the qualities of accessibility and *bonhomie* to a degree which Mr. Chamberlain has never possessed. Their political association has continued unbroken, and Mr. Chamberlain reposes great confidence in his former lieutenant. Fresh evidence of this was supplied by Mr. Chamberlain's appointment of Sir Kingsley as Secretary of State for Air when that position was by common consent of paramount importance.

Sir Kingsley succeeded at the Ministry of Air another friend of Mr. Chamberlain in the person of Lord Swinton. Lord Swinton had the unusual political experience of having been on terms of personal friendship with Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Swinton were Cabinet colleagues for many years, and, though they are so no longer, Mr. Chamberlain is still sometimes the guest of Lord Swinton for shooting in Yorkshire. Lord Swinton however, despite long political experience, has little natural flair for politics; and, though he was more successful at the Air Ministry than most people realize or are ever likely to credit, he exercises little influence on public affairs to-day.

Of Mr. Chamberlain's advisers outside his Government the two most important are Sir Joseph Ball and Sir Horace Wilson. Both these two figures were until recently little known to the general public, and Sir Joseph Ball still is so. His association with Mr. Chamberlain is of some long standing, for he is director of the Conservative Research Department,

of which Mr. Chamberlain became chairman in 1930. Sir Joseph acts as a sort of unofficial adviser to Mr. Chamberlain, and is in a position to give him the same sort of assistance in the compilation of the varied speeches which it falls to a Prime Minister to make as Mr. Tom Jones was to afford Mr. Baldwin. But whereas Sir Joseph Ball was personally associated with Mr. Chamberlain before he became Prime Minister, Sir Horace Wilson was a legacy from Mr. Baldwin. Sir Horace started life as a secondary schoolboy and became a second grade Civil Servant. He is however a man of great ability and unremitting assiduity. His success as a negotiator and conciliator in industrial disputes led to his being included in the Ottawa Delegation, where as we have seen he attracted the attention both of Mr. Baldwin and of Mr. Chamberlain. He became a 10 Downing Street man, and stood high in the confidence of Mr. Baldwin. When Mr. Chamberlain succeeded Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister there was speculation in inner political circles as to whether Sir Horace would continue in his position of adviser. In fact, not only did he retain his position, but he stands even higher with Mr. Chamberlain than he did with Mr. Baldwin. The much publicized pictures of him seated with Mr. Chamberlain in the flights to Germany in September of 1938 brought him more prominently into public notice than perhaps he would have desired, for he was made one of the objects of the attacks upon appeasement. He retains however Mr. Chamberlain's confidence in a high degree, and has even been vigorously defended by him on the floor of the House of Commons, where it is unusual for the merits of civil servants to be debated.

Perhaps the most significant of Mr. Chamberlain's political associations, from the point of view of world affairs to-day is that with Lord Halifax. Mr.

Chamberlain had sat in Cabinets with Lord Halifax (or Mr. Edward Wood or Lord Irwin, as he previously was), but there had not been any particular intimacy between the two. Lord Halifax is considerably younger than Mr. Chamberlain, and their political association was interrupted by Lord Halifax's tenure of the Viceroyalty of India. Lord Halifax was a Baldwin man, for he was a close associate and personal friend of the former Prime Minister, in whose first government he was President of the Board of Education. It so happened however that, though there had up till that time been little intimacy between Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, shortly before Mr. Baldwin's resignation the Chamberlains went to spend the week-end at Garrowby, Lord Halifax's place near York. The occasion was one of mutual discovery, and Mr. Chamberlain was greatly impressed with Lord Halifax, whom he felt that he got to know for the first time. The consequence is of very considerable importance in European history, for Lord Halifax acted as the bridge between the foreign policy of Mr. Baldwin and the foreign policy of Mr. Chamberlain. Subsequently it has fallen to the two men to act as chief framers and interpreters of British foreign policy, and upon them principally has rested, and continues to rest, the tremendous burden and responsibility of the decisions taken in these critical times. Lord Halifax is a man not only possessed of considerable political shrewdness, but imbued with deep religious feeling. His is a character that may well possess a quality lacking in Mr. Chamberlain, an element of fanaticism. Such a quality would have seemed out of place in the political exchanges of the Victorian era to which in some respects Mr. Chamberlain belongs; but we live in a different world to-day.

Mr. Chamberlain has also shown a disposition to

encourage the participation of young men in political office. It is true that some of the appointments appear to smack of the bad old practice by which promotion to junior office depended more on wealth or social connection than upon ability. But on the whole Mr. Chamberlain has shown an interest in the views of a younger generation, which is undoubtedly commendable in a man of his age and position, subjected to such exacting requirements in the discharge of his own duties. This is part of a broader and more general characteristic of Mr. Chamberlain; he has not shut his mind to new influences or new ideas. He is a man absolutely and properly dominated by his respect for the facts of a situation. It is this quality which has given him the reputation amongst those who are prepared to subordinate facts to wishful thinking of being narrow and obstinate. In fact he is resolute in his determination to let facts have their say, and this quality in itself was becoming sufficiently unfashionable in British politics to attract the unkind and inaccurate label of obstinacy. In controversy Mr. Chamberlain has always been spirited. In Mr. Baldwin's 1924-9 Parliament he was one of the few members of the Treasury bench who made a practice of taking his coat off and hitting back at the Socialists with equal vigour and rather greater effect than that which they infused into their attacks. In those days he remained completely impassive, and as if oblivious, while attacks were actually being made upon him. This helped to earn him the reputation of being cold and inhuman. That this is a wrong inference is suggested by the fact that the converse does not apply: Mr. Chamberlain has not shown himself to be cold or insensitive in the House of Commons towards those who have made appreciative remarks with regard to his policy or the work of his Department. In fact

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obscure back-bench members, both on the Government and on the Opposition side, have been surprised at the prompt and punctilious acknowledgment of any such references. The summer session of 1939 has also exhibited a certain departure from the impassivity under attack, which Mr. Chamberlain has always previously exhibited. One could observe in the House of Commons that he grew somewhat restless under the attacks of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George, often delivered with a rhetorical brilliance, which he knew he could not hope to equal in answer. Sometimes he would clutch angrily at some reference to himself or his actions, and on at least one occasion he and Mr. Lloyd George entered into angry exchanges upon the floor of the House.

All things considered however Mr. Chamberlain has maintained his dual burden with remarkable fortitude and restraint, and with real regard for rights of critics in a system of parliamentary democracy. It must be remembered when telling of his part in the story of the international history of the last few years, that he is exposed to criticisms and subject to duties from which his totalitarian prototypes are free. The energy and strength of his personality, remarkably preserved and resilient under every strain, have been bent to the task, difficult some would say to the point of impossibility, of defending the place and rights of democracy in a challenging world by reliance on democratic methods and by means of democratic machinery.

THE MIGHT HAVE BEEN

THE Napoleonic Wars ended in something more than a victory for the Allied Powers. The result was a victory for stability. The reason for this was that the Allies were successful in their effort to make their victory a victory over the government of Napoleon and the spirit of militarism, and not a victory over the French people. The result was that, though the peace of Europe was disturbed on various occasions in the nineteenth century, France planned no war of revenge and there was no major universal conflict for a hundred years.

There was an idea in the minds of the Allied Powers in 1919 that the same successful result should be achieved. Unfortunately the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were not such as to make it clear that the victory was over the government of the Kaiser and the spirit of militarism, and that there was no defeat for the German people. The Treaty of Versailles is not without its defenders even to-day. It is perhaps too much to hope that a treaty framed at the conclusion of a long and sanguinary war should be a model of clear political thinking. It is a pity that the terms of peace cannot be drawn up before the war is started and before the feelings of the nations are exacerbated. The cardinal error of the Treaty of Versailles, apart from its economic aspects the impropriety of which have since been generally recognized, was that it professed to a guiding principle, and then was not in every respect governed

by it. The principle was that of nationality and of the self-determination of peoples. It is true that much was done by the Treaty of Versailles towards the vindication and realization of this principle. But there were sufficient breaches of it, committed in the strategical interests of stability, to sow the seeds of further potential conflict. It is a matter of some controversy as to how far the ruling forces in Republican Germany were animated by regard for peace and stability. It must be assumed, however, that there were some elements who were desirous of assuring an honourable future for a democratic or near democratic Germany in a stable Europe. It would have been in the interests of the Allied Powers to invest these elements with the dignity attaching to a party which was capable of promoting the best interests of the country. Instead of this they were invested in the public regard with the responsibility for the Treaty of Versailles, which was generally felt to be a national humiliation. Given these circumstances, and the chequered and uneasy economic conditions of the post-War years, it may be that it was inevitable that some form of strongly nationalist party should rise to power in Germany.

In considering the situation which confronted Mr. Chamberlain on his first becoming concerned with foreign affairs, some little time before he succeeded to the Premiership, it is essential to bear in mind the general background of post-War Europe and in particular the events since the rise of the Nazi power in Germany. In the immediate post-War years active revisionism was confined in the main to Italy, which considered that it had won the War, but lost the peace, and to Hungary. The dominant motive in Germany at first was the effort to obtain a modification of the economic terms of the Treaty

and to free German soil from the military occupation of the foreigner. It may be noted that in fact both these results were, at any rate in large measure, achieved by the statesmen of Republican Germany. It is also worth noticing that, at times when such results were being achieved, the Nazi party made little progress. Thus it, and similar organizations, advanced for instance during the French occupation of the Ruhr, and declined during the Locarno period which followed the release of Herr Hitler from prison. It is arguable that a little more concession, given perhaps by the Versailles Powers in a freer spirit of conciliation, would have stemmed the advance of extreme nationalism in Germany. At the same time it is far from proven that at any time in the disturbed state of the world, which followed the cessation of the War, it would have been safe for France to indulge in any substantial measure of disarmament.

Nor was it in fact safe for this country, with its far-flung possessions and almost limitless responsibilities, to do so. That in fact Great Britain did disarm was due to a variety of causes. In the first place, and principally, she respected the implications of the Treaty in this regard. Secondly, it was a policy which appealed to the instincts of laziness and isolation which are characteristic of the British people in what they believe to be times of calm. Lastly, it must be admitted, that part of the responsibility was attributable to a malignant post-War disease, which afflicted the British people in general and their politicians in particular, of which the chief symptom was to allow the basic facts of any given situation to be obscured in the clouds of verbiage and wishful thinking. To some extent therefore British post-War policy made the worst of both worlds. It might have armed, and neglected to conciliate: or it might have conciliated and neglected to arm. Best of all it might have

armed and endeavoured to conciliate. In fact it neither armed, nor did it conciliate.

At the start of the second post-War decade, therefore, there were inherent weaknesses in the British position. The millennium so ardently expected in 1919, in which war would be outlawed, had failed to eventuate. Great Britain however did not brace herself to realize this fact and make her own dispositions to see that at any rate her own strength was sufficient for her to play her full part in the interests of honourable peace and stability. But, though beneath the surface these weaknesses existed, the political position of Great Britain, at any rate on a superficial view was not unsatisfactory. She was still linked to France by the ties of common interests and the memories of common effort and common suffering: she retained her traditional friendships with Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Far East: the Weimar Republic was not ill-disposed, and an undoubted friendship existed between the people of Great Britain and the people of Germany: her relations with Russia, though not cordial on account of the propaganda activities of the Comintern, appeared yearly to become less strained. On the surface at all events the position was not lacking in cause for encouragement. It should not however have required great discernment to perceive that a deterioration in economic conditions would in all probability be followed by a deterioration in the political situation. It was vital therefore that at that time a policy of realism should be pursued by the statesmen of this country. Instead unfortunately the helm passed to a pacifist Premier, deeply infected with the prevailing disease of verbiage, and from him to a successor, who though not a pacifist, was scarcely less inclined to confuse the relative importance of words and facts. As the official Opposition con-

sisted of politicians, who were at that time professed pacifists, but who did not seem to appreciate that pacifism takes the sting out of truculent talk, it is not too much to say that the political guidance of Great Britain was fraught with danger to the position of the country. That the decline has taken place, and that danger has visited us is a matter of common knowledge. That such would be the development, with things as they then were, was no occasion for surprise, when to the vigour of disappointed political nationalism was added the stimulus of economic depression and consequent need.

The early 1930's witnessed a crescendo of the internal struggle in Germany as to whether Nazidom should prevail or no. The struggle was keen, but the forces of the Republic were handicapped by their identification with the Treaty of Versailles and by the economic depression. In the beginning of 1933 Herr Hitler finally emerged victorious and gained as his prize the government of Germany. Far-sighted people at once realized that here was an event of perhaps incalculable importance in the history of Europe. Unhappily the same fatal combination of wishful thinking and truculent talking exhibited itself in many quarters with the result that there was a simultaneous tendency to disparage and provoke. In fact it should have been clear that here was a body of men, likely to be very different in choice of method and quality of determination from their predecessors of the Weimar Republic. This being so, it should have been obvious that an ultimate appeal to force should not be considered a remote possibility. At the same time there was no reason why their proposals should not have been immediately invited and considered in a reasonable spirit. At that time it must be remembered the Nazi party was new to power, their hold on the country was speculative,

and Germany was comparatively unarmed. The dual course of rearmament and discussion of grievances found individual sponsors in this country, *quorum minima pars fui*. Unfortunately however such a course did not commend itself to the powers that be, nor—so far as can be ascertained—to the majority of the nation. That course was not adopted and the opportunity was not seized. The clouded story of the next few years was lived in the shadow of that failure.

Though realism was not greatly in evidence amongst those who contributed to the formation of British foreign policy in 1933, there were not lacking in the Continent of Europe statesmen who were able to grasp the true meaning of the situation created by the rise of the new Germany. One of two courses had to be pursued: either the Nazi Government of Germany must be suppressed, or the other states in Europe must speedily resolve to work in harmonious co-operation with it. Action following both these two lines was proposed by two great European statesmen of the day. Marshal Pilsudski, then Dictator of Poland, inclined to the former policy, and made proposals to France for an invasion of Germany, while she was yet powerless to resist it. France, however, refused her co-operation. The reason for such refusal lay partly in the distaste of her own Government, reflecting in turn a disinclination of the French people as a whole, to such extreme action. But a strong subsidiary reason was the disapproval with which it was felt that such an open employment of the methods of power politics would meet in Great Britain. This proposal therefore came to nothing, and its frustration was to have important results in the European politics of the future.

The sponsor of the alternative line of policy was

Signor Mussolini. He appreciated from the first the growth in strength that was likely to follow upon the Nazification of Germany, and the consequent change in the existing status in Europe. His proposal therefore was that Britain, France, Germany and Italy should form a Four Power Pact, which would ensure a measure of consultation between these leading powers. Opposition came to the scheme from the lesser Powers, and notably the near-great Powers such as Poland, who feared that decisions affecting matters of common European interest might be taken over their heads. Neither Great Britain nor France was anxious to offend the smaller Powers, who were their fellow-members of the League of Nations, and consequently, although the Pact was signed in Rome, it remained a dead letter. Despite this failure, Signor Mussolini continued to pursue a realistic policy in Europe. He realized that a spread of German domination in Central and South-eastern Europe must be detrimental to, if not destructive of the position which Italy had built up for herself in the Danube countries. This consideration had already prompted Italy to veto, with doubtful morality, the proposals put forward in 1931 for a Customs Union between Austria and Republican Germany. Now, with the supersession of Republican Germany by the more menacing Government of Herr Hitler, the Duce hastened to strengthen his position in Central and South-eastern Europe. He was the acknowledged protector of Dr. Dolfuss, who in March of 1933 suspended parliamentary government in Austria, and became virtually a dictator. By the Rome Protocols the policies of Hungary and Austria were virtually united under Italian direction, and the potential German menace even brought about a rapprochement between Italy and Jugoslavia, which were normally sundered by traditional hostility.

But for Great Britain the age of realism had not yet dawned. For her it was still the age of conferences. The year 1933 was the year of the Disarmament Conference and of the World Economic Conference. But whereas Britain's main interest in the Disarmament Conference was to produce a plan for the limitation of armaments, Germany was determined to use it as a lever for obtaining the right to equal armament. In the autumn of 1933 Germany left the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. Consternation was caused in certain quarters in Great Britain by this gesture of defiance. But unfortunately the correct deductions were not drawn. Clear warning had already been given earlier in the year by the attitude of Japan in the Manchukuo dispute that strongly armed powers would care little for a League of Nations or a system of collective security, unless they were supported by fully armed nations, able and ready to bring force to bear. The real answer to the events of 1933 would have been a strong measure of rearmament undertaken by this country. Unhappily that answer was not given. In October of that year the East Fulham by-election was won by the Socialists on an incongruous policy of Pacifism. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald, with their predilection for following what they believed to be public opinion instead of leading it, took fright. They believed that this vote given by a portion of the London electorate—itsself the most politically unreliable in the country—which had not been told the basic facts of the situation, represented a national disinclination to assume the burden of rearmament. It was a miscalculation, to put it at its most euphemistic, for which palliation is likely to be sought in vain at the bar of history. The failure to rearm; the failure to discuss grievances; the pursuit of a policy of pinpricks without power, provided from the very

beginning evidence that British statesmanship had not correctly assessed the situation which it had to meet.

In international affairs nothing spreads more quickly than an impression. From a comparison of the attitudes adopted by the British and French Governments on the one hand and the German on the other the impression was not slow to form, nor slow to spread, that Germany was on the up-grade, whereas France and Great Britain were on the decline. Early evidence of this was provided by the conclusion in January 1934 by Poland, which in the previous year had suggested summary methods for dealing with Germany's resurgence, of a ten years' pact of non-aggression with Germany. It is true that a term of this Pact was the renunciation by Germany of her eastern claims against Poland for the period of the Pact; but, in view of Hitler's denunciation of the Pact midway through its currency, it may perhaps be doubted as to whether the renunciation was ever intended on the German side to be more than a temporary renunciation of convenience until the time for promoting such claims became more propitious. Further, Germany gained quietude on her eastern frontier in order to pursue her other objectives. To realize the full extent of the German diplomatic triumph it must be borne in mind that since the War Poland had ranked as a client of France in matters of European foreign policy. But in addition to their respect for the growth of German strength, the Polish Government was also attracted by the anti-Soviet aspect of their policy. The inherent feeling of hostility between Germany and Russia, born of ancient race antagonism and conflicting ideology, had been strengthened in 1933 by the tactless claim to German participation in Russian territories put forward by Herr Hugenberg

at the World Economic Conference. France therefore felt to some extent compensated for her declining influence with Poland by symptoms of closer relations with Russia. This feeling however did not extend to Great Britain where the trial in Moscow of the British engineers aroused keen resentment.

The French Foreign Minister of that day, M. Barthou, was a man of energy and vision, who quickly appreciated that, if the tendency in Europe started by Poland was not to develop, effective counter measures were required. With this end in view he undertook a tour in South-eastern Europe in order to confirm the Little Entente (i.e. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Roumania) in their solidarity with France. He also visited Poland, where he had a cool reception; but the moment seemed propitious for France for various reasons. Chief of these perhaps was an episode not directly connected with the politics of France: this was the first meeting between the German and Italian dictators. This meeting was not a success, for each dictator found the personality of the other antipathetic and no common ground of policy was discovered. Indeed Hitler refused to guarantee Austrian independence, the obtaining of which had been Mussolini's principal aim in holding a conference. The effect of these abortive talks at Venice was strongly to incline Mussolini to closer relations with France. This gave M. Barthou considerable assistance in his project in South-eastern Europe, where all the states were on terms of friendship either with Italy or with France. It is true that the full project of what was known as an Eastern Locarno, in which Germany could join, was frustrated because both Germany and Poland, which since the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact in January had inclined to side with Germany, refused to participate. But in spite



CRISIS AT GODESBERG, SEPTEMBER 1938

of this M. Barthou had high hopes of success in his policy of consolidating the anti-revisionist Powers, and these hopes received fresh encouragement in September when Russia joined the League of Nations and a clear move was made towards Franco-Russian unity. Italian interest too seemed clearly to lie in co-operation with France, for shortly after the unsuccessful conversations between Hitler and Mussolini a Nazi putsch in Austria ended in the murder of Dr. Dolfuss, and many considered that only prompt action by the Duce prevented a German absorption of Austria at that time. The chief, if not the main, obstacle to unanimity in South-eastern Europe was the hostility existing between Italy and Jugoslavia. It was with a view to healing this discord and simultaneously to confirm the good relations existing between France and Jugoslavia that M. Barthou invited King Alexander of Jugoslavia to pay a state visit to France. The stage seemed set for a revival of the success of the traditional French policy. But the hand of an assassin struck down the two principal actors, and by the murder of King Alexander and M. Barthou French policy received a sharp rebuff.

Once again the impression went abroad that France was decadent and Germany in the ascendant. The failure to preserve the life of a visiting monarch, added to the internal dissensions which had followed the revelation of the Stavisky scandals early in the year, put French reputation at low ebb. Great Britain meanwhile was still, prompted by wishful thinking and inept leadership, pursuing the will o' the wisp of disarmament. Germany, on the other hand, was rearming unofficially but with vigour. The events of the year had impressed upon Herr Hitler two things, if indeed he was still in need of any such lessons. In the first place, he was clearly going to carry weight in Europe in proportion to his

strength, that is to say his equipment and readiness for war; secondly, for the time being at any rate, he could hope to make but little progress with his designs in Central and South-eastern Europe so long as Italy stood in the way. These lessons were not lost upon Herr Hitler; but they appear in the main to have been lost upon British statesmanship and the bulk of British public opinion. And in December of 1934, as if to point the lesson and reinforce the warning, came the incident at Wal-Wal, far away on the borders of Italian Somaliland, the unexpected consequence of which was to scatter the schemes of statesmanship and to overturn the balance of power.

Such was the position at the end of 1934. The chief defect of British statesmanship was perhaps that, confronted with problems which clearly demanded a settled course of action, they preferred to drift. They might have elected to pursue a policy of co-operation with the new Germany, defining spheres of influence and exacting a limitation of armaments. On the other hand they might, if they distrusted the philosophy and designs of Nazi Germany, have lent the weight of their influence to those sections of thought, never very far in the background in France and the Versailles States, which advocated strong measures of repression, while these could still be undertaken without undue risk of a European conflagration. Instead they preferred to do neither of these things. Unwilling fully to co-operate, they conceded sufficiently to suggest weakness: disinclined to repress, they obstructed sufficiently to suggest a petulant ill-will. Above all, in an armed world they refused to appreciate the imperative urgency of rearmament and national preparedness.

Few sections of the community can escape some share of the responsibility for what was a national *malaise*, the loose worship of familiar catch-words

such as "indivisible peace" and "collective security" and the refusal to face unpleasant facts or to bend to unpalatable necessities. To the Government of the day naturally a high degree of blame must attach: indeed the best, if not the sole, extenuation that can be put forward on their behalf, is that the official Opposition was a great deal more misguided in their attitude, while public opinion was in a flabby and unhealthy condition. Do I then except Mr. Chamberlain from a share in the responsibility which attaches to members of that Government? I do not. It seemed to me then, and it seems to me now, that there was no sufficient reason for not pressing on the work of preparedness, and that it was the duty of any member having access to Cabinet councils there to raise his voice in insistent demand that the realities of the situation be recognized and that the preparation for national strength be put in train.

Having thus stated categorically that I do not, and cannot, exempt Mr. Chamberlain from some measure of responsibility which must attach to any man who remained a member of a government in which that policy was not punctually and presciently pursued, I should add this consideration. Mr. Chamberlain was Chancellor of the Exchequer in that Government, and the function of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is normally to act as a watch-dog on the nation's finances. He is there to check and restrict expenditure, being alone not representative of a spending department. In the ordinary way therefore, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be the last member of a Government Department to urge schemes of expenditure. In Mr. Chamberlain's case this consideration was reinforced by the fact that he was appointed to his office at a time of acute economic crisis, and was charged with the

high responsibility of piloting the nation through its difficulties to economic salvation. To this task he bent his energies with a measure of success which has been described in the penultimate chapter. In doing so he showed a degree of single-mindedness necessary to the discharge of that duty, and by the same token praiseworthy. Mr. Chamberlain had never in his political career been attracted to the sphere of foreign affairs, and his absorption in the financial affairs of the nation forbade any very close attention to the matters under review in this chapter. Anybody concerned to make a case for Mr. Chamberlain on this point—which I am not—could legitimately argue that his contribution to British rearmament was abundantly made in directing the policy which provided the financial basis of it. From the point of view of the narrator, rather than of the apologist, it is true to say that up to this time Mr. Chamberlain had had no very close connection with foreign affairs. It had been his practice to regard Sir Austen as the specialist in foreign affairs, and there is no doubt that the view-point of Sir Austen was tinctured with greater realism than that of most Parliamentarians at this time. Mr. Chamberlain's own incursions into foreign affairs, such as they had been, had also been marked by his own inherent quality of realism. He had for instance at an early stage made caustic reference to the illogical coupling-up by the Socialist Party of a policy of complete disarmament with a professed readiness to take on all comers in the interests of collective security. Again in October 1934 which was as we have seen a crucial point in the development of the international situation, he explained his point of view at the Conservative Party Conference. Lord Lloyd had very properly brought forward a motion pressing for greater defensive equipment for Great Britain. Mr.

Chamberlain in an amendment to Lord Lloyd's resolution impressed upon the Conference that resolution and words were of little value. There must be not only a readiness to pass such resolutions, but a willingness to finance them, and if necessary to shoulder the burden imposed thereby.

Mr. Chamberlain's attitude was refreshing evidence of much-needed realism. In the next phase of the working out of the international situation, in which Mr. Chamberlain personally was to play a considerably larger part, he continued to be guided by similar considerations.

EUROPEAN DECLINE

THE opening of the year 1935 showed those with understanding that the task of preserving European stability was likely to be fraught with increasing difficulty. It is true that at that time German attention was largely concentrated on propaganda to secure the return of the Saar to the Reich. In this Hitler scored a resounding success, by completely legal methods, the dual effect of which was to raise his prestige and to give added determination to the German policy of regaining "the lost territories." This accretion in German strength, coupled with British obstinacy in clinging to the bedraggled remnants of disarmament policy and with France's loss of prestige, should have made it clear that a policy of keeping German pretensions in check, if such was desired, could best—if not only—be pursued along the line of corporate action and by those who had reason to fear the relentless advance of the new Germany. Foremost among such powers, and distinguished for the realism which had animated her policy since the rise of Hitler, was Italy.

Realization of this, however obscure to many wordy and well-meaning Parliamentarians in Britain and in France, was crystal-clear to M. Laval, who in the beginning of 1935 was Prime Minister of France. M. Laval saw the desirability of not allowing a state of affairs in which Italy and Germany should make common cause for revisionism pursued by Fascist technique. In January of 1935 therefore M. Laval

visited Rome, where he concluded an agreement with Italy whereby certain territory in Africa was ceded by France to Italy and other concessions made with a view to removing what were considered to be legitimate grievances of Italy in that quarter.

Thus matters in Europe seemed to have taken a turn for the better, when Hitler carried out his next stroke. This was the denunciation of the military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and the reintroduction of conscription into Germany in March 1935. Once again there was a disagreeable flutter in the dovecotes of Europe. The politicians of Europe reacted to this evidence that Germany intended to be governed by the law of her own strong right arm according to their various temperaments. Mussolini suggested practical co-operation, and Mr. MacDonald busied himself with thoughts of protest. Great Britain, in fact, sent a note of protest on her own initiative, the chief effect of which was to arouse not unnatural resentment in France because she had not been consulted. The German action did not prevent the visit of Sir John Simon to Berlin as arranged, which duly took place one week after the denunciation. It was at this visit that the Fuehrer blandly informed Sir John Simon that Germany, technically disarmed by the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, had already attained parity with Great Britain in the air.

Here was the moment for a decision; here was the time for action. The British Government should have bent itself vigorously to the production of armaments, and notably of aircraft, to ensure that Germany should not outdistance her. Here was the time for vigorous co-operation between the Great Powers to ensure that the initiative should pass from Herr Hitler, and that whatever changes and revisions might take place should be the subject of consent and not brought about by dicta-

tion or the threat of force. Some evidence there was of intention to accelerate the production of armaments, but the chief immediate effect appeared to be the dispatch of young Mr. Eden, with his party manners, on a European tour. A more effective deterrent to potential aggressors and a more emphatic encouragement to our Allies would no doubt have been a resolution then and there that the nation would not rest until her equipment was such as to qualify her for the full and immediate discharge of any responsibilities that she might assume.

The fact that these manifestations of German intentions made co-operation between the other Powers desirable was not overlooked. Indeed, the outcome was the famous Stresa Conference between Great Britain, France and Italy. In fact this conference was little more than a manifestation of what might have been. The Conference duly disapproved Germany's unilateral action in thus denouncing the provisions of the Peace Treaty, and Mr. MacDonald returned to London apparently well satisfied that a redoubtable blow had been struck in the cause of peace. The Duce had no such illusions. He saw that international conferences as such were of no value in the situation that was rapidly coming into being. Had the various parties to the Stresa Conference been determined to apply restrictive methods to the treaty-breaking of Germany and at the same time put themselves in a position where words of reproach could be backed by a show of superior force, there could have been a real Stresa front. This was no doubt the concept which Mussolini had in mind, and it was clearly a method by which the stability of Europe could have been assured. Unhappily the circumstances of its defeat were already in being.

The incident at Wal-Wal on the border of Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland was by this time clearly going

to have repercussions wider and more sustained than such border incidents generally have. By this time it was, or should have been, clear to those in the inner circles of diplomacy, that Mussolini was entertaining the idea of a punitive expedition, if not more grandiose designs, against Abyssinia. Already troops were being assembled and concentrated in Eritrea and Italian African possessions in readiness against the execution of some such design. If it was desired therefore that Mussolini should halt in his progress, the Stresa Conference at latest was the time to make to him representations to that effect. Instead a silence was maintained, even if there was no suggestion on the French side as has sometimes been thought, that France would not oppose the African design. Not unnaturally the Italian Government assumed that silence gave consent, and consequently went ahead with their preparations. They were further fortified no doubt in their view, that Great Britain was not averse to unilateral action by the spectacle of her conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty in June. This, coming so soon after the Stresa Conference, was naturally greeted with criticism on the part of France and Italy. It was defended by the British Cabinet on the ground that it was a definite limitation of armaments in a world anxious to secure some such limitation, and not as yet conspicuously successful in so doing. Whether the quotas would be entirely satisfactory would depend of course to some extent on British requirements in Far Eastern and non-European waters. Specific French criticisms were met by pointing out that on the existing basis the Agreement gave an incidental 43 per cent superiority to the French over the German fleet, compared with the 30 per cent inferiority of pre-War years.

Thus the summer was reached with the Italian

dispute with Abyssinia moving towards the climax, and no authoritative word of caution addressed to Mussolini. At last the step was taken of sending Mr. Eden to try and deflect the Duce from his chosen course. The interview was not a success. The position of Minister for League of Nations Affairs, to which Mr. Eden had just been appointed upon his promotion to the Cabinet, was not such as to commend him to Mussolini; nor did the two men find in each other a sympathetic personality. Apart from these considerations, however, the time was too late to expect the Italian Dictator, with his reputation for infallibility to consider, to draw back. Not at any rate unless he was given a golden ladder by which to descend. It is understood that Mr. Eden's tactics were somewhat brusque, and Mussolini was given the impression that he was expected to slither down the drainpipe before his house collapsed over his head. The result was that Mussolini pursued his designs unchecked, and early in October invaded Abyssinia with Italian troops.

This is not the place to rehearse the merits of the Abyssinian dispute. It is perhaps sufficient to say here that the Italian point of view met with too scant a comprehension in this country, and that enthusiasts for the League of Nations presented a somewhat fanciful picture of the government and conditions obtaining in Abyssinia. What is important to consider here is the effect of the whole episode upon the European situation. The lead in calling for the imposition of Sanctions was taken by Great Britain, where the demand for it was personified by Mr. Eden, of whom critics alleged that sudden rise to international stardom in the world of politics had gone to his head. M. Laval and the French Government were lukewarm about a project which appeared to risk so much in order to gain so little. As in so

many instances, however, France sacrificed her more expert and logical view of foreign affairs in order to follow the lead of Great Britain. Thus it was that on November 18th Sanctions were voted by the League of Nations against Italy. The event occasioned great satisfaction among uninformed and unpractical enthusiasts everywhere; but the only real cause for satisfaction lay with the realists of Berlin and Moscow.

To pass sentence of outlawry upon Italy was, viewed from the standpoint of the future of the world, a bad thing. To pass such sentence and then to be unable properly to put it into effect was a worse thing. Two fundamental mistakes were made by Great Britain in the application of Sanctions. In the first place it was a cardinal error to embark upon the policy of Sanctions at all at a time when rearmament was still in its infancy and not therefore sufficiently advanced to justify resort to war. Secondly, there was a general misapprehension shared by Mr. Baldwin, who was by this time Prime Minister, as to the relative strength of the Italian and Abyssinian positions and the time which the Italians would require in order to carry out the military conquest of Abyssinia. If the campaign had been going to require two years or more for its completion, which appeared to be a prevalent belief in the autumn of 1935, the application of Sanctions might well have exercised some deterrent effect. As it was, they acted as a stimulus to the whole Italian nation, and not only replaced for the time being the traditional friendship of the Italian for the British people, but encouraged in the world at large a contempt for the machinery of the League of Nations and for those Powers who had put its machinery into operation without being able to achieve results therewith.

There was in the autumn of 1935 a minority of

politicians and publicists in Great Britain—for the most part Conservatives—who foresaw something of the effects of the Sanctions policy, and who preferred to conduct their Election campaign in the October Election of 1935 on the straight issue of rearmament rather than on the fashionable, and supposedly popular, League of Nations ticket. Shortly afterwards, events so far began to vindicate the foresight of this minority that it gained strength in the Cabinet itself. There had always been a strong feeling in France that a compromise solution would best meet the case, and the result was the drawing-up by Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval of proposals which would have ended the war by a partition agreement between Italy and the Negus. These proposals might possibly have satisfied the parties, and brought the war to an end. Unfortunately no such chance was accorded them. Their details were prematurely published in the French Press, and were subjected to an intensive newspaper barrage by the Press of both countries before the case in their justification could be put forward. The result was not only the refusal by Mussolini of the projected terms, but the abandonment of them by Mr. Baldwin's Government. The result, as is within the recollection of all, was the ejection of Sir Samuel Hoare and the promotion to the Foreign Secretaryship of Mr. Eden to continue the policy of Sanctions to what was in truth the bitter end.

What was the attitude of Mr. Chamberlain during this critical period? He was not to the fore because, as already explained, Foreign Affairs were not yet his province. Sir Austen was at this stage one of the most prominent, and probably the most effective of the critics of the Hoare-Laval proposals. He was a League of Nations man, and was clearly determined to hold fast to its principles, so long as he thought they

might be of any practical utility. So soon, however, as he was convinced that Sanctions could be of no practical value, he advocated the raising of them to prevent their continuance from acting as a mere irritant upon Italy. Mr. Chamberlain, while always respecting profoundly the judgment of his brother on Foreign Affairs, did not this time share his original view. As a home administrator in the post-War years he had not been infected with the League tradition to the same extent as Sir Austen, and it seemed to him on a plain man view of the situation that a solution which would leave the Negus with part of his territory and close our quarrel with Italy was preferable to a course which would end in the annihilation of Abyssinian existence and the deterioration of the European position in consequence of our estrangement from Italy. He therefore supported the Cabinet proposals, and was shocked and surprised to find that Sir Samuel Hoare was to be thrown overboard on account of the part which he had played in the effort of solution. He was in fact the first member of the Cabinet to go and see Sir Samuel after his resignation from the Cabinet. This Mr. Chamberlain did without delay, and assured Sir Samuel at this first meeting that he would do his best to procure his re-entry into the Cabinet at the earliest possible date. He was as good as his word, and to no small extent was instrumental in getting Sir Samuel Hoare back into the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty.

Unfortunately it was not so easy for Mr. Chamberlain or anybody else to restore the European position of twelve months previously. It soon became clear to all but the most fanatical that the prolongation of Sanctions was serving no good purpose, for in the spring the tide of war ran strongly in favour of the Italians against such sporadic and divided resistance as they encountered. By May the victory of the

Italians was complete. They were in Addis Ababa, and the Negus was on his way to Bath.

Meanwhile with the attention of the world concentrated upon the Abyssinian conflict and with Britain pursuing, with diminishing confidence, the policy of teaching Italy a lesson, Hitler made another of his lightning assaults upon the European status quo. Seizing upon the Franco-Soviet Pact, which was ratified in Paris at the beginning of March 1936, as a pretext, he suddenly announced on the 7th of March not his intention of re-occupying the demilitarized zone on the Rhine, but the fact that German troops were already marching into it. They marched in with fluttering pennants, and without doubt no less fluttering hearts—for a Napoleonic “whiff of grape-shot” would certainly have annihilated the invaders and the project simultaneously. But the whiff was never fired. Poland again proposed to France that corrective measures should be taken by way of an invasion of Germany; and once again France referred the matter to the British Cabinet which, in accordance with British sentiment at that time—which would have considered unethical the use of violence to prevent the Germans occupying what was in fact their own territory—vetoed the project. It may be added that Hitler with customary address sugared the pill by proposing various non-aggression pacts and schemes for the limitation of armaments, which were solemnly discussed after the fashion of the time. Thus at a time when Italy was successfully defying the power of the League of Nations, Hitler whipped his coach and four through the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles on which that power rested.

It was time for British statesmanship to come to earth. An unmistakable lead in this salutary process was given by Mr. Chamberlain. The occasion, which has since become famous, was the Annual Dinner

of the 1900 Club in June 1936. In it he made the first direct frontal assault upon the continuance of Sanctions which had been made by a member of the Government. In taking the line that he did he acted not without courage because he was running counter to a point of view which had had free expression and very wide organization. At a time when the succession to the leadership of the Conservative Party and to the Premiership was at issue, he staked his chances of the reversion upon the reception which his speech would meet. There was no doubt about its reception among his fellow diners. I was present myself and recall the enthusiasm with which his vigorous speech was greeted as a token of release from the tyranny of words and an emergence into a more realistic conception of policy. Mr. Chamberlain referred to the "grievous estrangement between two countries with a long and unbroken record of friendship behind them" which had resulted from the Italian affair in Abyssinia. With regard to Sanctions he said, "There is no use for us to shut our eyes to realities. The fact remains that the policy of Collective Security based on Sanctions has been tried out . . . and it has failed to prevent war, failed to stop war, failed to save the victim of the aggression. I am not blaming anyone for the failure. I merely record it now because I think it is time that we reviewed the history of these events and sought to draw what lessons and conclusions we can from them." Mr. Chamberlain then went on to stigmatize, in a vivid phrase, the policy urged in certain quarters that Sanctions should still be maintained and prolonged as "the very mid-summer of madness." Mr. Chamberlain ended his speech by emphasizing the need for strength: "There is another conclusion which affects this country more directly and which was indeed arrived at by the Government some time ago, but which has been, I

think, burnt into the minds of the people by what they have witnessed during the past eventful twelve months. It is this: whatever may be the policy by which we seek to secure peace for ourselves and others, whether it be a policy of isolation or of alliances or of collective security in one form or another, it seems quite impossible for us either to protect our own interests or to play an effective part in making an effective contribution to a system of collective security unless we are adequately armed. . . . No one in his senses believes that the forces of this country would ever be used for aggressive purposes. On the other hand, no one looking round the three continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, can doubt that if we are to play our part in preserving the peace of these great regions, if indeed we are to maintain our own imperial interests and vital lines of imperial communication, it is absolutely necessary that we should rehabilitate our armed forces without delay."

The speech had its effect, though not quite as immediate as might have been hoped. It was July before Sanctions against Italy were finally raised; that is almost three months after the practical conclusion of the war. But by then much of the damage which could and should have been foreseen from the policy of the preceding year had already accrued. Italian resentment against Britain and France for the part which they had played in the application of Sanctions made Italy naturally more inclined to an alliance with Germany. Germany, with considerable tactical wisdom, had not only, as might have been expected, refrained from joining in the imposition of Sanctions, but had also refrained from taking any steps with regard to Austria. Mussolini was indeed at this stage far from disinteresting himself in Central Europe, and had indicated as much to Hitler by



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holding manœuvres near the Brenner in the early autumn of 1935 immediately before launching the Abyssinian campaign. Considerations of Italy's position in Central and South-eastern Europe still inclined Mussolini to co-operate with the other Stresa Powers, whereas the Sanctions episode inclined him towards Germany. In the earlier part of 1936 his mind was not made up as to which course he would pursue. The raising of Sanctions, even belatedly, was a consideration to influence him towards Britain and France. But there occurred in the summer of 1936 three events, the combined effect of which was to tip the balance in the other direction.

The first of these events was the accession to power in France on June 1st of the Popular Front Government under M. Blum. This was a circumstance of infinite disaster not only to France, but to the cause of Europe as a whole. Formerly, as we have seen, it was often the amateur understanding of international problems on the part of Great Britain, which had impeded France. Henceforth for two years French action was fettered and French policy was misguided on account of the Popular Front Government. In point of fact, Mussolini was at the outset prepared to co-operate with France, in spite of ideological differences with her new Government. But Blum, who appears to have been entirely without political capacity, failed to avail himself of the opportunity when it was offered to him.

The second event was the conclusion on July 12th of the pact between Germany and Austria. By this pact, Dr. Schuschnigg, the then Premier of Austria, believed that he had obtained the much sought after guarantee of Austrian independence, for a pledge was given to the effect that Germany had neither the intention nor the desire to mix in the internal affairs of Austria, nor to amalgamate with, nor annex, that

country. Dr. Schuschnigg was not alone in attaching this interpretation and corresponding importance to the pact. Mussolini also considered that the German guarantee removed the threat to his European position, and with it the chief reason for his reluctance to co-operate with Germany.

The third event was the outbreak of civil war in Spain. Here again it would not be in point to canvass the merits or underlying significance of that contest. It is arguable that greater support for Republican Spain would have resulted in the defeat of Franco, and the establishment of a Spain better disposed towards Britain and France: it is also arguable that support for General Franco would have placed him in a position of greater independence of his Axis sponsors and thus, without affecting the actual result of the contest, would have achieved the same effect. In point of fact Great Britain adhered to a strict policy of non-intervention, which was considered by Nationalist Spain to assist her opponents, while the Popular Front Government in France, together with Russia, gave assistance to Republican Spain behind the façade of non-intervention, and Italy and Germany did likewise on behalf of Franco. Germany and Italy therefore found themselves co-operating in what was represented as an ideological struggle, but in which strategical considerations no doubt played a major part.

The result of all this was a complete reversal of the policy of Stresa in 1934. In October of 1936 Mussolini sent his son-in-law, Count Ciano, to Berlin to undertake negotiations. On November 1st he was able to announce that the line between Rome and Berlin was not a line of division but an Axis. It was one of the catch-phrases of history.

The formation of the Axis, as the new line-up of the Totalitarian Powers quickly came to be known,

was such as to demand the close attention of Great Britain and France. Unfortunately while France allowed herself to be distracted by civil discord, a distressing domestic episode was allowed at this vital hour to engage the attention of British opinion and occupy the energies of British statesmanship. This was the Windsor incident, in which Mr. Baldwin appeared to find more malleable material than he had encountered in the international situation. The chief interest of the Windsor affair in retrospect—and the personal element has been grossly over-emphasized—is that it prolonged Mr. Baldwin's tenure of office beyond what might otherwise have been its term. In the summer of 1936 Mr. Baldwin had a breakdown in health, and Europe in the summer of 1936 was no place for the statesmanship of a sick man. The state of his health necessitated a long vacation, and his place at the Conservative Party Conference, which it is the annual practice of the leader of the party to address, was taken by Mr. Chamberlain. The interest of this lay in the fact that it was pretty clear evidence that Mr. Chamberlain was now considered heir-at-law of Mr. Baldwin to the Premiership. Though he had been for some time Chancellor of the Exchequer, his succession to Mr. Baldwin had only recently become a matter of common acceptance. There were those who considered that he was too much Mr. Baldwin's contemporary—he is in fact his junior by only two years—to be a fitting successor. Others considered that his personality would prevent him from having the same platform appeal which Mr. Baldwin had undoubtedly exercised over a large section of the community.

In fact Mr. Chamberlain's rivals had gradually fallen away, and when the time came he had what was virtually a walk-over. Sir Douglas Hogg, who had been considered a possible successor to Mr. Baldwin

at the end of the 'twenties, had gone to the House of Lords as Lord Hailsham. Mr. Churchill had split with the official body of the party on India and in spite of the fact that he had been the great and consistent advocate of rearmament, was not given Cabinet rank after the 1935 election. There was little support for Sir John Simon, the National Liberal leader, and what little chance Mr. Runciman possessed had vanished when his old father unexpectedly accepted an hereditary peerage. The only other possible competitor was Sir Samuel Hoare, whom many people at one time thought to be designated by Mr. Baldwin as his successor. He, however, had offended one wing of the party as Secretary of State for India, and another wing of it by his share in the Hoare-Laval proposals, and consequently was hardly to be considered in the running in 1936. Consequently, Mr. Chamberlain went smoothly, without contest or rivalry, into the position of heir-apparent to Mr. Baldwin, and as such addressed the Conservative Party Conference in October 1936.

TRANSITION

THE increasing gravity of the international situation with its repercussions on foreign and domestic policy was temporarily eclipsed by the nine-days' wonder of the Abdication. The emotional exhaustion involved in this poignant and mysterious episode may have been partly responsible for the negligible public reaction to a premature though highly significant compact between the British and Italian Governments, the object of which was to liquidate outstanding Mediterranean disputes between their two countries and sanctify the *status quo* among all the nations bordering that sea. This so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement" was the first serious effort on the part of the British Government to improve diplomatic relations with the dictatorships by direct bilateral methods, and in many respects marks the birth of that particular form of appeasement with which Mr. Chamberlain's name was subsequently to be identified. Mussolini heralded this return to realism in no uncertain fashion by landing a large force of Italian volunteers at Cadiz on the very day the Agreement was signed, and the good impression created by our diplomatic initiative was soon outweighed by Mussolini's aggressive attitude. By the end of February Italy had landed more than 40,000 men in Spain. Two weeks later the Duce was expressing through his Press the view that the establishment of a Bolshevik Government in Spain would be a modification of the *status quo* within the meaning

of the Gentlemen's Agreement, and as such was not to be tolerated. Herein were the seeds of Anthony Eden's resistance to Italian aims and disagreement with Mr. Chamberlain which culminated in his dramatic resignation a year later.

For the present, however, it was possible for the Cabinet to take a grave view of the situation without being in any serious danger of splitting over the essential aims of its non-intervention policy. On January 19th in a big debate on Foreign Affairs Mr. Eden was speaking of co-operation in "the common work of political appeasement and economic co-operation," and of our refusal to agree that "the alternative for Europe lies between dictatorships of the right and the left." Political appeasement and economic co-operation needed the collaboration of all. Within a fortnight both M. Blum for France and Mr. Chamberlain in Britain's name made speeches endorsing and underlining these sentiments. Mr. Chamberlain went so far as to give Hitler the hint that it was in his power to give Europe a sign of peaceful intentions which would set at rest the uneasy fears of the whole world. Hitler's answer came the next day in the fourth of his annual monologues celebrating the Nazi accession to power on January 30th, 1933. This speech was in effect a reply to the British Questionnaire of July 1936, and was in the Hitlerian sense of the word conciliatory, though the very delay in acknowledging the questionnaire constituted the real measure of Germany's refusal to submit to the limitation imposed by international guarantees. "Germany," he declared, "will never sign a treaty in any way incompatible with Germany's honour or her vital interests, and which therefore could not in the long run be kept." As for disarmament—each country must decide for itself without any interference what arms it deemed

necessary for its security. In place of co-operation Hitler conjured up the Four Year Plan and the vision of self-sufficiency.

Two days previous to Hitler's Reichstag speech a Conservative M.P. had voiced what amounted to alarm both in Parliament and the country at large at the state of our air defence. In the course of the debate Mr. Churchill asserted that the Government statement implied simply that we would not reach parity with Germany throughout 1937 or even 1938. It was against this background of uncertainty, intrigue and disquiet that Mr. Chamberlain made his historic statement in the House of Commons on the financing of our rearmament programme. To an admiring world and an anxious taxpayer he revealed that the Government proposed to ask for general powers to raise capital or use realized surpluses up to a sum not exceeding £400,000,000 spread over a period not exceeding five years. The House was horrified and taken aback by this figure. Mr. Attlee who had raised the question, suggested that before any discussion should take place on it, members should be given the necessary data for forming a judgment. A White Paper was accordingly issued on February 16th which put the loan into its astronomical perspective. While the Government's defence proposals were to remain flexible and were to be modified by circumstances either in expansion or curtailment it would be imprudent to contemplate a total expenditure on defence of much less than £1,500,000,000. The next day Mr. Chamberlain asked the House to authorize the Treasury to raise loans for the £400,000,000 for a period ending March 31st, 1942. The resolution also laid down that the sinking fund could be invoked for the same purpose.

With this unparalleled estimate the man who had struggled with the herculean problems of restoring

the nation's financial structure after the Economic Crisis of 1931 was now forced to put forward proposals which were admittedly designed to meet an even deeper national necessity but which in themselves constituted a threat to all his previous efforts at retrenchment. At this moment he did not abandon his reliance upon financial common sense as he might have been tempted to do in meeting this unprecedented situation. His argument in the light of the events of the last two years makes impressive reading, indeed in view of his assertion that the Government in naming this figure did so in the light of the information at their disposal, merely leads to the regret that it could not have been presented to the House a year earlier; but even in February 1937, the full nature of the wrath to come was still not fully revealed to us and Mr. Chamberlain's statement was criticized more on the ground that his estimates were excessive than because they might soon be too modest.

In his reply to Labour strictures on his methods of raising the necessary moneys for defence, Mr. Chamberlain indulged in an unusually witty thrust with a rare, apt and—keeping in mind the austerity of the occasion and Mr. Chamberlain's dialectical reticence—most surprising quotation. "I notice," he said, "that the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition is not that of the fanatic who says that all expenditure must come out of taxation, but rather takes the form of a plaintive protest that it is too bad that the Government should get away with a proposal to raise £400,000,000 by loan when he and his friends got into sad trouble when they raised £100,000,000 for the purpose of keeping the Unemployment Fund solvent. I wonder that the Right Honourable Gentleman should bring up that particular incident or should think there is any

analogy between what happened at that time and what we are proposing now." "I have on my table," Mr. Chamberlain continued, "a calendar which has a quotation for every day in the year, and happening to cast my eye upon the quotation for to-day it appeared to me singularly appropriate to the particular matter to which I have just alluded. It comes, quite unexpectedly so far as I am concerned, from Ellen Terry, a lady who at any rate knew a great deal about human nature. This is what it says, 'There is all the difference in the world between departure from recognized rules by one who has learned to obey them, and neglect of them from want of training or want of skill or want of understanding. Before you can be eccentric you must know where the circle is.'" In this respect all Mr. Chamberlain's financial proposals were gilt edged when the order of the day was either Economy or Expenditure, for his action was based upon sufficient knowledge of his material. He made it clear on this occasion that the loan could be covered and that an alternative loan would cripple our resources. Weak in armament we were an irresistible temptation to the aggressor, strong, a potent influence for peace: this led him on to a *cri du cœur* which he has never expressed more eloquently, and which has been the dominant motive of all his subsequent policy. "No one, least of all the Chancellor of the Exchequer, can see this growing accumulation of burdens without a feeling of disgust and shame that civilization is trying to break its own back instead of trying to settle its differences by give and take, and turning its energy to the pursuits which might bring prosperity and contentment to all." His heart was in constructive measures—whether it was the rebuilding of houses or of national finance—which can flourish only in the settled assurance of peace condi-

tions; from henceforward his lot was cast to frame a war economy and ward off as best he could the challenge of Armageddon.

The Opposition reserved its distrust for Mr. Chamberlain's speech not so much for what it said as for what it left out. The Chancellor was an experienced politician and his refusal to mention the League of Nations or Collective Security—words which with their rapid decline in life and meaning were beginning to assume an almost mystic content—implied in their view a sinister acceptance on the part of His Majesty's Government of the degrading realism of power politics. A more than usually explicit speech from Mr. Baldwin in the opposite sense merely had the effect of causing Labour suspicions to shift ground from rearmament itself to the method of financing it and they voted against the resolution. This speech by Mr. Baldwin, by the way, has a certain significance in the light of Mr. Chamberlain's future policy, for in it he committed himself to the assertion that "I think it may well be that in the immediate future the most hopeful prospect will be the prospect of a regional pact." It was worth everything for Europe to get a feeling of security at any rate in one part which might in due course spread outwards. The House must recognize that the League to-day differed from the League as originally contemplated. The difficulties in the way of those who tried to work for Collective Security through a League which was without some of the most powerful and mighty armed nations in the world were "almost insuperable." This was the principal argument Mr. Baldwin used to underline Mr. Chamberlain's Defence Bill, and the speech as a whole should be studied as limiting the apparent break in continuity in British Foreign Policy when it was taken over by Mr. Chamberlain from Mr.

Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin was Mr. Eden's protector and when the crisis of February 1938 broke he did not abandon his protégé or criticize his viewpoint, but at the same time frankly regarded Mr. Chamberlain's attitude as the only possible one in the circumstances and as representing the right approach to settlement through the limited agreement of the Western European Powers.

The next week on February 25th, Mr. Chamberlain moved the second reading of the actual Defence Loans Bill and made a strong effort—which must have had a reassuring effect on the City—to remove unwarrantable fears. There were no adequate reasons for supposing that the borrowing would weaken national credit, raise prices or depress the standard of living. During the past six years the country's credit had been put on such firm foundations that it could deal with borrowing on a far larger scale even than was now proposed; saving on the interest alone of the National Debt during the last three years was almost sufficient to cover the average amount of borrowing contemplated in the Bill. Labour, however, maintained its attack in Committee. Mr. Pethick-Lawrence's motion that the amount the Government might borrow should be reduced to £200,000,000 was rejected by 199 votes to 87. He then, more reasonably, asked the Chancellor for an assurance that he would use such powers as he had to get the money at the lowest rate and that he would make no attempt to float loans at an appreciable rate of discount such as 1 or 2 per cent and under no circumstances resort to the bad practice adopted during the Great War of floating loans on Bank Credit. Mr. Chamberlain needed no reminding of the dangers involved in lavish and extravagant offers of this nature and while refusing to bind his successor assured Mr. Pethick-Lawrence

that for himself he intended to act on the lines he urged. The Bill was given its reading on March 4th. It was at the end of April that subscription lists were opened for an issue of £100,000,000 2½ per cent National Defence Bonds at 99½. It is significant, however, of the failure to appreciate the threatening situation that the loan did not meet with an enthusiastic response from the public and was soon at a discount.

No sooner had Parliament approved his colossal defence estimates than Mr. Chamberlain and the nation at large were to suffer bereavement. On March 16th the public was startled to read of the sudden death of Sir Austen Chamberlain. It would be an exaggeration to say that the public careers or private lives of the two stepbrothers were closely linked. They were not. Sir Austen's life work was over when Mr. Chamberlain's was beginning. During the last few months, however, they reached identical conclusions on the Sanctions issue, and Sir Austen's back-bench influence and prestige were such that when he abandoned Sanctions their Parliamentary fate was to all intents and purposes sealed. He was at his post to the end and followed closely his stepbrother's momentous Defence statements. Sir Austen's sudden death was undoubtedly a tremendous blow to Mr. Chamberlain who during the tributes that were paid with special eloquence and effect by Mr. Baldwin and the other party leaders maintained silence but was visibly affected. In private he was as near to despair as he has ever been. He had counted implicitly on his brother's guidance through the uncharted maze of foreign politics. "That this should have happened now" was all he could say, but he ranked it as the major tragedy of his public life.

It is of course impossible to estimate what attitude Sir Austen would have adopted to the events of the

next two years—the seizure of Austria (in the fate of which country he had taken so deep an interest), the Munich Agreement, or the Polish Pact—there is no doubt that had he lived, his advice on the great diplomatic problems of the past two years would have been highly valued by the Prime Minister and might have modified in some respects our policy and accordingly the shape of world history. Mr. Chamberlain has always had a healthy respect for the man who knows his subject. Is it a complete fantasy to suggest if Sir Austen had been alive his prestige and popularity, his disinterestedness, his intimate knowledge of Mussolini and his aims would have led the Premier to offer him the Foreign Secretaryship once again?

The remainder of Mr. Chamberlain's tenure of the Exchequer was taken up with an elaboration of Defence finance. The Service Estimates described the nature of our rearmament. For the Navy Sir Samuel Hoare declared that the new construction programme embraced eighty ships which with the work taken over from last year's programme meant that by the end of the year no less than 148 ships would be under construction. The Army and Air Estimates though less explicit were reassuring and ambitious. The vast sums involved in the Service Department programmes meant retrenchment for some of the other Ministries. The Ministry of Labour for example was forced to confine its schemes for the Special Areas to a mere £2,000,000. This aroused the fury of Labour and Mr. Lloyd George who assailed the cold inhumanity of the Treasury and Mr. Chamberlain for proposals that were "grotesquely inadequate." This stung the Chancellor to protest vehemently that no man had worked harder and longer than he to solve the problem of the Special Areas. He believed in an ultimate solution but he

knew of no short cut to it. The Opposition misdirected their aim when they attacked Mr. Chamberlain for insensitiveness to social reform or the condition of the people. His record on these subjects was the envy of most of his Conservative colleagues and his administrative drive and experience were not seriously challenged during the Socialist terms of office.

On April 11th, immediately after the Easter recess and before the Budget Mr. Baldwin in an address to his constituents at Bewdley announced his intention to retire from the Premiership as soon as possible after the Coronation. The reason he gave for his decision was personal. He was feeling too old and tired for what was in fact a tripartite job as Head of the Government, Leader of the Party and Leader in the House of Commons. He felt happy in the knowledge that he was handing over his office to one who was particularly qualified to hold it. Mr. Baldwin's announcement did not take the public unawares. Well-informed articles by political correspondents and the breezy notes of new weeklies whose chief claim to popularity was their capacity to get behind the headlines and secure for their readers as many intimate—even if imaginative—political revelations as possible, had forecast Mr. Baldwin's retirement for some time. It did not follow they were right; they have forecast Mr. Chamberlain's resignation on several occasions, but as this particular form of journalism covers most possible eventualities, it leaves little room for surprise. It may perhaps be noted in passing that no Prime Minister has ever been subjected to more searching and sensational publicity of this nature than Mr. Chamberlain—and none has been more eager to avoid it. Its origins are American and the technique is effective. Its spread during the past

two years argues a number of significant factors. The public clearly require more political news than they have been getting either from their daily papers or their acknowledged leaders; the reticence of the latter has merely whetted the public appetite for inside information. There is no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain's essential diffidence to the demands of modern publicity has involved him in considerably more criticism and misrepresentation than he might otherwise have had reason to expect.

Mr. Baldwin's announcement accordingly passed off without causing surprise. Mr. Chamberlain too was acknowledged on all sides to be the obvious heir to the throne, and the transition was expected to be as smooth as that which had put Mr. Baldwin in and Mr. MacDonald out. The next day a second reading was given to the Ministers of the Crown Bill, which among other things put the name of Prime Minister for the first time on the statute book and doubled his salary bringing it up to £10,000 a year. There was considerable criticism from both sides of the House but the evidence of official expenses and comparison with the salaries derived from other careers would suggest that the figure was a just return for the most important office in the world and sufficient to free it from temptation. It is not easy to estimate the personal expenditure involved in these great offices of state but it is safe to say that if either Mr. Baldwin or Mr. Chamberlain depended on their official salaries alone they would not be left with big bank balances. There remained one last major duty for Mr. Chamberlain to discharge as Chancellor—his sixth Budget. Once again the expectation was that all would run smoothly to an edifying and non-controversial end, but this time expectation was disappointed. In its main provisions this Budget had nothing

particularly sensational about it. It was bound to be dominated by rearmament, and Mr. Chamberlain's estimate that a revenue for the coming year of £847,950,000 from existing sources would leave a prospective deficit to cover of £14,898,000 was in itself satisfactory. Even so it was "an unwelcome task" for him to have to impose new burdens on the taxpayer in 1937. The first of these was 3d. on the income tax bringing up the standard rate to 5s. and without any remission for the poorer taxpayer. This was estimated to produce £13,000,000 which, with measures to cover tax evasion reduced the deficit to be met to the trifling figure of £1,748,000. Mr. Chamberlain however was not content merely to make good the deficiency of the current year. The Defence Loan meant severe borrowing for the next five years while arms expenditure was likely to increase. To meet this increase he wanted a source of revenue that was to grow proportionately and would eliminate the need for new taxes every year. He claimed to have found such a source in the growing profits among diverse trading firms during the past two or three years which were directly or indirectly attributable to the conditions created by the Government and which were likely to be further stimulated by the rearmament programme. He asked for a special and temporary contribution from them towards the cost of national defence which in order to emphasize its purpose he intended to call the National Defence Contribution.

This is not the place to enter into its detailed provisions; suffice it to say that they were highly controversial. For the current year, when it would only be in partial operation, all Mr. Chamberlain hoped to get from the contribution was £2,000,000. The following year £20,000,000 to £25,000,000 was

the estimate based on the general prosperity of the nation. The announcement of this profits tax, kept by Mr. Chamberlain with an almost macabre relish to the very end of his statement, took the House completely by surprise. Neither Government nor Opposition knew what to make of the motives behind it. *Prima facie* the Socialists could only approve it, though they professed to regard it as essentially a vote-catching device to meet the need of a number of by-elections that were being contested at the time. None the less it was in line with Socialist theory, and therefore at once received by the Labour Party with thanks. To those Government back-benchers who were identified with the commercial interests whose profits were in question it was a further deplorable example of the Marxian proclivities of this astonishing administration which, secure in its 250 majority, was making a Gadarene rush for the very Socialism it was elected to avoid. They thought of coal royalties and shook their heads in bewilderment and dismay. The unusual power of the Whips on both sides of the House has been a notable—and in some respects a disquieting—feature of the present Parliament; but here in this comparatively small Budget proposal Conservative M.P.s saw the ingredients of Red Ruin and loyalty was strained almost to breaking point.

In explaining his Budget over the wireless Mr. Chamberlain confined himself to the belief that it was not unreasonable to ask expanding businesses for this contribution—"after all any help which they may give now will add materially to the national security which is essential to the maintenance of their prosperity." This was not enough to meet the inherent defects of the proposal, but on further reflection Government and Opposition alike modified their praise and disapproval and

reached a common conclusion that however desirable the theory of taxing excess profits might be, N.D.C. was in fact inequitable, and would fall most heavily on firms that had been struggling with depression and were just recovering, while it would miss those of greater financial strength which had maintained a constant margin of profit all the time. The new tax, to put it mildly, received a bad Press, which included a devastating analysis by J. M. Keynes in the form of a letter to *The Times*.

According to Mr. Keynes the firms that had suffered most from the slump would suffer most from the tax; it would fall most heavily on young and growing firms, on firms whose assets were largely intangible, speculative concerns in their nature risky, and wasting assets such as mines. Further its incidence would largely depend on the accident of a company's capital structure. A company with debentures or bank loans would have to pay more than a similar company with preference shares. The Chancellor had, it seemed, only home industry in mind, but without contrary provision it would involve overseas enterprise with head offices in this country. Mr. Keynes accepted the Chancellor's object in proposing the tax as being just and sincere, and few would dispute that he was well advised to look round for a new source of revenue. "But when he claims that the principle of this tax is approved what does he mean? What is its principle? He disclaims the idea that it is intended as a profiteering tax. The only principle apparent behind its anomalies and arbitrary incidence is that it is a tax on enterprise, growth and youth as such. Is this principle generally approved?" Mr. Aylmer Vallance in the *Evening Standard* subjected it to a withering comparison with the Excess Profits Duty 1915-21. The profits now were nothing like

as high. The background of war sacrifice then was not present to-day; the datum level giving the standard by which excess profits during the War were to be measured was the period 1911-13, a period during which prosperity was both sustained and uniform; the discrepancies in the N.D.C. 1933-5 period were glaring. At best it was a pale reflection of E.P.D. which at its height was bringing in £375,000,000 a year to the exchequer. The effect of N.D.C. would be to cause firms to offset their profits by extravagant outlay thus encouraging the danger of an inflationary boom in commodity prices. Mr. Chamberlain's method of raising the wind declared Mr. Vallance "scarcely seems to justify the administrative imbroglio, the check to enterprise, and the defiance of normal 'capitalist' justice which his proposals involve. For lawyers and accountants alone his Budget showers manna from heaven."

Sir Robert Horne was among those in the Budget debate who strongly criticized N.D.C. By the time Mr. Chamberlain replied to it his position was, politically at least, untenable and he gave hints that he was looking for the formula that would make an honourable retreat possible. He admitted that the details of his scheme were open to criticism, but this was largely because, owing to the need for secrecy, preliminary consultations and soundings had to be ruled out which were undoubtedly necessary for the successful administration of a proposal of this nature. He promised the House that he would make further inquiries in the interval that must elapse before the Finance Bill was introduced, and allow himself "a certain measure of elasticity." In the meanwhile he would redress an immediate grievance by setting off the severe losses suffered by shipping against any of its recent profits.

An astonishing bout of nervousness amounting almost to panic took hold of the Stock Exchange at the news of Mr. Chamberlain's Budget. Share prices slumped at once and it is estimated that within a week a depreciation of about £300,000,000 had taken place in the value of securities, making the situation worse than anything since the peak of the financial crisis in 1931. His speech on April 23rd winding up the Budget Debate had not materially improved the position, and there was at once a demand that he should withdraw the tax and meet his requirements by a further levy on income tax. On April 27th he again stoutly defended the shadow, but again shrewdly surrendered some more of the substance of his scheme: the standard years in which profits were to be computed might be varied, and "capital" (the legal meaning of which opened up an endless vista of dispute) might be computed differently for different industries. The opponents of N.D.C. were not appeased, and while for the present the domestic details of politics were forgotten in the loyal rejoicings of the Coronation and the impressive if vague good will of the Imperial Conference, it was clear that Mr. Chamberlain and the country had not heard the last of what was, during the whole of his stern, clear cut, realistic Chancellorship, his only flight of fancy. Many are of opinion that it was not his own idea, but that it was the pet theory of an important Treasury official who had for years submitted it to various Chancellors without gaining their ear. Mr. Chamberlain after five successive refusals, standing in need, as he did, of a long term revenue scheme, at last succumbed. Certainly this N.D.C. has the smell about it of departmental midnight oil; whatever its origins, Mr. Chamberlain assumed full responsibility for it and was never publicly persuaded that

he was wrong in doing so; he can hardly have expected that so modest a proposal—superficially so modest—would have involved him in a storm which had the effect of darkening the last days of the most impressive tenure of the Treasury since Mr. Gladstone's legendary Budgets, and of endangering at its outset the most momentous Premiership in our history.

Mr. Baldwin had retired only just in time. One publicist summarized an appreciation of his career under the apt heading "He always fell on his feet." The scandal caused by his excuse for our rearmament delays which he had excused not on the particular incompetence or inertia of a particular administration but on the general ground that "Democracy must always be two years behind the dictators," would have wrecked most public careers, but his handling of the Abdication helped the people to forgive and unhappily to forget his outrageous doctrine. Now he was assuming an earldom, receiving as a commoner plaudits usually reserved for royalty from the Coronation crowds, and in doing so handing over to his successor a heritage of unsolved riddles in international and domestic politics which would have daunted anyone who had not a full share of courage, conviction, and iron in the soul.

"Scrutator" of the *Sunday Times*, in a special article on the new Prime Minister, saw him as a true son of his father, a man who would get on with the job, grow with power and responsibility, who had a comprehensive mind capable of seeing the nation's policy steadily and whole. This would meet his comparative inexperience in Foreign Affairs. "We all know him to be a realist, not all know him as an idealist with fires that, banked by reserve, nevertheless glow ardently within and are capable of bursting into sudden blaze. Let the country realize that

they are there, and Mr. Chamberlain will be not merely a successful, but one of the great Prime Ministers." But there were not lacking those who felt the task and the position were too big for the man, and that he would lack that elastic capacity for compromise by which Mr. Baldwin had been able to lull both his own assorted majority and an Opposition, which if not formidable in numbers or quality of personnel, nevertheless represented a very wide divergence in national outlook from the Government of the day. Mr. Baldwin saw compromise as a noble element in the English character and accordingly elevated it to the status of principle. Mr. Chamberlain, it was argued, could rely on no such reassuring beliefs. His candour would be such that he would at once provoke criticism and resent it, and this would prove fatal at a time when the need for showing the world a united nation in votes and action as well as in words had never been more urgent. Mr. Baldwin too had been blessed with the gift of detachment. Sir Austen Chamberlain in an interesting posthumous article on his chief had paid tribute to this pre-eminent virtue in him. Was the new Prime Minister endowed with the same faculty—was not his range of vision narrower, his approach more partisan? Finally the inevitable preoccupation with Foreign Affairs would come hard to a man of sixty-seven whose political work had been almost entirely given up to specialist domestic issues. On him would rest the ultimate responsibility; would he feel incompetent to bear it and thus provide a factor making for weakness in the conduct of the Government and the State? For the moment however he was able to face the future with equanimity and resolve. On May 15th he was given the opportunity as Premier-elect to close in cordial terms the Imperial Conference which

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had been called to coincide with the gathering of Empire statesmen in London for the Coronation. He had made personal contact with these important colleagues and had been able to go deeply into the implications of Imperial Defence with them. This was an auspicious and timely preface to his Premiership, and there is no doubt that he made a very good impression on the Conference individually and collectively. On May 24th Mr. Baldwin in one of a series of magnificent orations on the Imperial theme made his last speech as Premier to an assembly of over a thousand of the Empire's leaders and dignitaries. Four days later he left 10 Downing Street for the last time, and Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Runciman resigned along with him.

Mr. Chamberlain's first duty was to form a new Cabinet. This he did by retaining the eighteen who were left and bringing in Mr. Burgin and Earl de la Warr. The two newcomers as representatives of the National Liberal and National Labour elements respectively did not make a great appeal to the Conservative rank and file who were strongly of opinion that the two minority groups supporting the Government were already in receipt of office out of all proportion to their rights or back-bench influence. Sir John Simon's promotion to the Exchequer which had been bitterly opposed for months, fanned the flames of this particular criticism, but Mr. Chamberlain's decision to retain the National façade of his administration on the whole showed strength and sound sense of tactics; more questionable was his decision to remove Sir Samuel Hoare from the Admiralty and to bring back in his place Mr. Duff Cooper, whose record at the War Office had not inspired widespread confidence.

One further preliminary was necessary. Mr. Chamberlain had to be elected Leader of the Con-

servative Party. At a special meeting at the Caxton Hall, Lord Derby moved and Mr. Winston Churchill seconded a resolution assuring him of the Party's loyal and wholehearted support in the tasks that lay before him. The speech Mr. Chamberlain made on this ceremonial occasion has a personal and political significance which with the subsequent gathering momentum of events has perhaps been overlooked. In the first place he impressed on his audience the essential unity of purpose guiding the House of Chamberlain. "I know you will forgive a personal note if I say that ever since Friday last my thoughts have reverted continually to my father and my brother . . . I look upon my position to-day as the continuation—perhaps I may say the consummation—of their life work." Lord Derby and Mr. Churchill were to be particularly remembered as having "at the outset of their careers the strong interest and approval of my father," and as being "personal friends of my brother to the day of his death." As for Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Chamberlain stressed that they had been close friends for fourteen years, and that in spite of differences in temperament which "are almost as obvious as our differences in personal appearance, our outlook on politics and on people has been very much the same." He forced his potential critics on to the defensive from the outset by underlining his origins as Liberal and Liberal Unionist, his belief in Disraeli's dictum that the Conservative Party was nothing if not a national Party and his concept of the Party to-day as only an element even if the largest and strongest in a National Government. This national character must continue. Of even more importance for the future, however, was his one brief reference to Foreign Policy. "These next two years," he declared, "may well be critical in the history of

Europe, and whether they end in chaos or in a gradual appeasement of old enmities, and the restoration of confidence and stability will depend very likely upon the part played by this country which is bound to be important and may well be decisive." Thus Mr. Chamberlain's first official pronouncement on Foreign Affairs as Prime Minister coincided with his first allusion to the word appeasement in the controversial political sense which he was to attach to it. Chaos is presented as the alternative to the appeasement of old enmities: it was not unreasonable to suppose that a man of Mr. Chamberlain's drive and pertinacity would soon be finding out what action was necessary to achieve such appeasement, and, however drastic the consequence and bitter the opposition, not permitting himself to be diverted from his objective.

For the present however caution and caniness were the watchwords both on the home and the foreign front. The N.D.C. spectre was still haunting the City and the Government's loyal back benchers. Having successfully disposed of the Civil List and defended the Royal Family from mistimed Socialist criticisms that their estate was too big a drain on the Exchequer, Mr. Chamberlain faced the challenge of the Finance Bill. This was the Government's first major task. As usual it was a reproduction of the Budget, only this time full use was made of the opportunity to insert material alterations in the N.D.C. proposals. Unfortunately the agitation in no way subsided, nor were there any reassuring signs of a return of confidence in the business and financial worlds. Sir Robert Horne, in political exile but formidable on all financial questions, denounced the new modifications as no solution. They merely showed how inadequately the whole subject had been studied before the Chancellor opened his

Budget. "It is now shown more clearly than ever that the fundamental basis upon which the National Defence Contribution is founded is wrong in principle and must inevitably lead to pernicious results that may leave a permanent mark on our commercial and industrial life."

A major political crisis was clearly brewing, but Sir John Simon in his first speech as Chancellor stood firm and made much of the new concessions. These involved a more generous allotment of the standard years by which the profits were to be assessed—the taxpayer instead of having to take the three years 1933–5 could now choose between taking any three out of four years 1933–6 or any two out of the original three years 1933–5. For those who preferred to base calculations on a percentage of capital the percentage would now be raised. There were other details of this nature, but Labour preferred to launch a general attack—the proposal failed to deal adequately with profiteering or to raise an equitable share of the cost of rearmament from those most able to bear the burden. Government supporters were not, of course, prepared to carry their hostility so far but were still highly critical. Several Conservative speakers with otherwise blameless records at the Whip's Office begged the Government not to impose the dilemma on its faithful followers of having to vote for a measure which their conscience and good sense condemned or of refusing to do this and so bringing the Government itself into danger. With the situation gravely out of hand Mr. Churchill interposed with a speech in his best and wittiest vein—a Parliamentary *tour de force*. He began by pointing out that the changes made in the tax had done little to remove the apprehensions of the City. Their only purpose had failed. His theme was that the

Government should not let mere considerations of prestige stand in the way of its withdrawing this obnoxious method of raising the required money. To console Mr. Chamberlain he cited the example of Mr. Baldwin who had made an immense reputation both in Parliament and the country by disowning measures which he had sponsored in the first place. It was in effect a form of confidence trick which always worked! Further it was a recognized expedient for Chancellors of the Exchequer to give up pet schemes, as he himself had done with the kerosene tax; it at once increased their popularity.

Behind his banter and mockery Mr. Churchill was pointing the only way out for Mr. Chamberlain. Incidentally, in doing so he had at one stroke recovered all the ground he had lost over his attitude to the Abdication crisis. With this speech half in friendship, half in anger, he took up an ambiguous attitude towards the Premier which he was to reinforce again and again with increasing eloquence and effect and which was to constitute the greatest single challenge to Mr. Chamberlain's otherwise unquestioned ascendancy over the House. Mr. Chamberlain's reply on this occasion was that of the experienced Parliamentarian who has seen the red light. He continued to insist that his thesis that increased profits should be subjected to a special burden had not been assailed. He had detected a certain amount of hysteria in the business world's criticisms of his proposals. Nevertheless he recognized that in consequence of its too vivid imagination business had been held up to an undesirable extent. But in as far as industry did not presume to challenge the propriety of his finding the amount he wanted from their profits, he thought it would be stupid of him to persist in his own method which

would no longer bring in all he wanted, when he could get considerably more by a simpler method. The slogan he would adopt would be a "Simpler Tax with a larger yield." Labour persisted in its opposition but was handsomely defeated by 340 votes to 191. Mr. Chamberlain had escaped personally unscathed from a dangerous dilemma. Indeed, when the new N.D.C. was produced in the middle of June involving among other things a straight tax on all profits over £1,000 a year and bringing in £25,000,000 a year for five years there was at once general rejoicing. What at the outset would have caused dismay for its complexity—it took up no less than five clauses and three hundred and eighty-four lines of the Finance Bill—was now hailed as a model of simplicity.

The burdens of the second N.D.C. were considerably heavier than those of the first, but with peculiar British logic it took the outcry at the first to make the second acceptable. Mr. Chamberlain of course could not have foreseen this, but Mr. Churchill was right—by running away he had gained the victory. There were casualties. It was a blow to the Administration's prestige while for Sir John Simon the humiliation was complete; within a few hours of being put up to give in his first speech as Chancellor a detailed defence of the old contribution his chief had repudiated it. There were more than the usual grounds for the bitterness with which he described the popular response to the new N.D.C. It might almost have been a voluntary contribution he observed. With this obstacle removed the Premier was now free to survey the Foreign scene and it was a bleak and discouraging prospect that confronted him.

THE BREAK WITH EDEN

THE scope of this book does not permit of anything approximating to a comprehensive or detailed survey of Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister. The story is as yet so far from its gigantic completion; we stand so near the breathless sequence of diplomatic manœuvre and political crisis; there is so much undigested and unco-ordinated material, so many facts and so little perspective that to undertake any more than a brief and unadorned account would be an impertinence. Such an account does not need to be strained or distorted to convey the central and decisive part the Premier has played in the dynamic development of world politics. A simple narrative of the facts is the greatest tribute to his significance, the supreme apologia for his method and aim. He would not ask for more, but when one considers these facts the full magnitude of his struggle for peace is at once apparent. A selection of his principal speeches under that title delivered between May 1937 and April 1939 comprises no less than 434 closely printed pages.

The narrative falls naturally into four phases. The first dominated by Mussolini and Spain is brought to an end with Mr. Eden's resignation. The second leads logically from Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden to the Big Four at Munich. The third is the period of gestation, diplomatic uncertainty in the Wilhelmstrasse, military and political preparation at Whitehall culminating in the absorption of

Czecho-Slovakia and Hitler's repudiation of his territorial guarantee to Mr. Chamberlain. The fourth is inevitably taken up with the tremendous drive to war which took Hitler on his mad journey from Prague to Poland. The first two phases are concerned with the adoption and culmination of the so-called policy of appeasement, the last two with its decline and collapse and the hurried substitution of and search for the Peace Front, the full development of which the outbreak of war forestalled.

The Gentlemen's Agreement had been premature; a second "Spanish ulcer" was in process of poisoning once again the whole political system of Europe. In spite of intense diplomatic pressure on Berlin and Rome, by the end of February at least forty thousand men had been landed in Spain by Italy. Parallel with this ever-increasing invasion various countries were working desperately to inoculate themselves against the plague of the new totalitarian aggression. The end of February saw also the imposition by no less than twenty-seven Governments of a ban on their subjects going to Spain to take part in the war and a similar prohibition on the export of their munitions. A few weeks later after negotiations that were only saved from fatuity and destruction by the utmost persistence on the part of Britain and France, agreement was reached on a system of supervision of the frontiers of Portugal and the Spanish coast. The British Government as evidence of its good faith in promoting this hollow concordat passed a Bill providing that all British ships going to Spain were to call at an arranged port to embark an Observation Officer. The Non-Intervention Committee—"Old Nick" as it was affectionately and shrewdly termed—then proceeded to tackle the problem of the withdrawal of volunteers. It was, however, insoluble without goodwill

between Russia, Germany and Italy on the one hand, and between these three countries together and Britain and France on the other. Nor was complete harmony always attainable as between London and Paris. There were fissures in the Popular Front. Blum's authority was being challenged.

Indeed as a whole there has hardly ever been a civil war in history in which there was such a complex diversity of interest and idealism as in the Spanish conflict. Russia, it could be claimed, was less concerned than Italy, but it depended from what standpoint you chose to consider the matter. If you were a Left Book Club advocate, Stalin's contribution was meagre and mercenary, and Hitler and Mussolini all-powerful. If you belonged to British City interests your alarmed attention would be divided between Soviet instability and Nazi penetration, while ignoring the contribution of the Italian partner. Every technical issue taken up by the Non-Intervention Committee effectively revealed how deep these dissensions went. When withdrawal was on the table Italy and Germany at once exploited delaying tactics, and Mussolini's spokesman with calculated indiscretion let it be known that withdrawal as far as Italy was concerned could only begin to be considered when the Reds had been defeated. All the same during April there was some progress. Mr. Eden, while admitting that Non-Intervention was not fully satisfactory, was able to stake a claim that the flow of men and munitions into Spain was less extensive than it would have been without Non-Intervention to stem it. He reiterated the basic principles behind it. It was designed to prevent the Spanish War irrupting over the borders of Spain and engulfing Europe. As long as war was confined to Spain Non-Intervention could not be said to have failed. Secondly, it was Great

Britain's only alternative to intervention and all the perils such a policy entailed. If when the control scheme was in full operation there was still intervention, "His Majesty's Government would view the situation thus created with the gravest concern." This was Mr. Eden's thesis. There is no doubt that it was Mr. Chamberlain's also. Reading between the lines, we were not at this stage risking a general war with the Totalitarian Powers to enforce the full operation of the control scheme.

The beginning of Mr. Chamberlain's Premiership coincided with a marked intensification of the conflict: the destruction of Guernica horrible in effect, merely strengthened rival allegiances, for claim and counterclaim were hurled across the floor of the House. Mr. Eden's official admission that foreign aircraft were helping General Franco raised the heat of Party debate. There followed the bombing of the *Deutschland* which provided Hitler with his excuse to withdraw from the control work of Non-Intervention and to take ruthless reprisals on Almeria. The accumulation of incidents merely fortified British patience. The Government now put forward proposals for extending safety zones and establishing a common responsibility if ships were attacked. Hitler accepted our formula, only to tear passion to tatters over the so-called *Leipzig* incident. The allegation, never substantiated, was that the *Leipzig* on patrol duty had been struck by a torpedo. This was enough for the Fuehrer to throw the whole of the control system to the winds again. The German fleet was withdrawn from areas where it was the object of "Red target practice." The Italians followed suit, and the Opposition in a debate on June 25th fired another broadside on the whole policy of Non-Intervention. Mr. Chamberlain, in a notable defence, made it clear that no amount of abuse or



THE PEACEMAKER ACCLAIMED
10 Downing Street, night of September 30th, 1938

partisanship or even intervention would deflect him from supporting Non-Intervention as long as we felt that by it there was a reasonable hope of avoiding a spread of the conflict.

How statesmanlike this resolve was can be seen from the fact that at that very moment in the Far East Japan was shipping her armies to the Chinese mainland for yet another aggression, this time on a more extensive scale and with more sustained savagery than ever before. It was clear this time that Japan's move was an immediate threat to every Power with political, social and economic investment in the new China of Chiang Kai Shek. Britain's naval strategy now had to take double strain; while something in the nature of £240,000,000 of British capital was locked up in China. Such was the context of Mr. Chamberlain's now famous peroration to this speech. It took the form of a very earnest appeal "to those who hold responsible positions both in this country and abroad, and I am including the Press and the Members of this House, to weigh their words very carefully before they utter them on this matter, bearing in mind the consequences that might flow from some rash or thoughtless phrase. I have read that in the high mountains there are sometimes conditions to be found when an incautious move or even a sudden loud exclamation may start an avalanche. That is just the condition in which we are finding ourselves to-day. I believe although the snow may be perilously poised, it has not yet begun to move, and if we can all exercise caution, patience and self-restraint, we may yet be able to save the peace of Europe."

Mr. Chamberlain, as this book endeavours to testify, is never given to hyperbole or over-statement. When he uses grave words he implies grave events. He had not misread the situation at this time and

his words created a deep impression throughout the country. To those with discerning eyes it soon became apparent that the new Prime Minister would not leave the peace of Europe, if it was indeed as fragile as he suggested, simply to the tentative and halting deliberations of the Non-Intervention Committee. On the other hand, the Government gave it some new material to work on when on July 14th it published moderate and well-reasoned proposals which included limited belligerent rights as soon as there was evidence of substantial withdrawal of volunteers. It took the Committee approximately a fortnight to reach deadlock again. Accordingly at the end of the month Mr. Chamberlain on his own initiative wrote a personal letter to Mussolini. It was sent in reply to a message he had himself received from the Duce which had been conveyed orally to him by the Italian Ambassador, Count Grandi. The letter was delivered by aeroplane to the Duce at Rimini where he was on holiday and on its return journey the same 'plane carried the Duce's reply. The contents of the two letters which were both hand-written have never been published, but in the diplomatic jargon "it is understood that Mr. Chamberlain expressed his desire to overcome present misunderstandings between Britain and Italy."

In these mild words was a tremendous objective which was nothing less than to detach Italy from the Axis. Such a policy if successful would not only offer Mussolini an opportunity to regain the initiative that was rapidly slipping away from him, but would also help to restore the security of our access to the Mediterranean which was indispensable alike in peace and war. Mr. Chamberlain with his letter threw out a life line by which the Democracies and Dictatorships of Western Europe could ultimately co-operate if they attached themselves to it in

time. As far as Anglo-Italian relations were concerned it offered the only adequate remedy for the running sore of the Sanctions crisis. The Gentlemen's Agreement had helped; as Mussolini observed it had "clarified the situation." Now he spoke of "the community of our Colonial Frontiers" and of a "lasting and definite conciliation between the way and the life" (this last antithesis was one of his most dramatic word plays. The Mediterranean for Italy was her "vita" or "life," for England merely "via" or "means of transit"). We were up against another difficulty, and a fundamental one: our rearmament was still largely on paper. We had prepared the invoice but the goods had yet to be supplied. When at a National Government Demonstration at the Albert Hall Mr. Chamberlain spoke of our strength in arms which "will in time convince the world of the wisdom of settling its disputes by peaceful discussions instead of by the arbitrament of force"—it was reasonable to interpret him as meaning by "in time" that the effect of our rearmament would be immediate when once it was ready. It was in this speech that he showed the essential realism of his approach to the Spanish problem. He described the troubles arising out of it as "only the by-product of the deeper causes of unrest in Europe; and until we can probe and treat the lesions where they lie we shall not get permanent relief from the irritation and unrest from which Europe is suffering."

It was not enough to detach Spain from Europe and Italy from Germany; it was imperative to get to grips with German demands. In the summer of 1937 they were apparently unspecified. Surely this was the moment to strike out for some more active form of goodwill and collaboration than had hitherto existed. For Mr. Chamberlain the project had a

special appeal; the attempt to reconcile Britain and Germany had been his father's most splendid failure in foreign policy. Sir Austen, an admitted Francophile, had yet lived to bring about the Franco-German handshake at Locarno. The consummation of their work would be the production of a lasting settlement with Germany as an equal partner in the comity of nations. Hitler could still make a strong case to his people and to the world at large that this equality had not been reached. Mr. Chamberlain was well aware that peace with Germany was not obtainable just for the asking, and in June there was a significant and somewhat mysterious attempt to make direct contact with the German Government by means of a visit to London from Baron von Neurath the Nazi Foreign Minister. It was reported in the Press on June 21st that a Western Pact would be negotiated with the Baron's arrival in London. The next day, however, *The Times* announced that the visit was postponed. It is difficult to believe that the motive for postponement was confined to the turn of events in Spain. The full meaning of this episode however is not as yet revealed to us.

While Mr. Chamberlain was enjoying a well-earned vacation difficulties soon arose. Following the refusal of the Home Office to renew the permits of three German journalists the Nazis asked the Foreign Office to ask *The Times* to remove from Germany their senior correspondent in Berlin, Mr. Norman Ebbutt. *The Times* ignored the request but shortly afterwards Mr. Ebbutt was ordered to leave by August 21st. This was a particularly maladroit and provocative move. *The Times* with its immense influence was in active process of identifying itself with Mr. Chamberlain's views, and the Germans were gratuitously insulting a powerful

advocate of their just demands. Almost at once there followed a grave development in the Spanish situation in the form of submarine piracy which constituted a real threat to French and British trading interests in the Mediterranean. The possibility of compromise with the Powers directly or indirectly responsible for these outrages once again receded into the background. Drastic action was necessary, and with vigour and conviction Mr. Eden on the British Government's behalf brought the Powers to Nyon, which was about as near to Geneva as it was expedient to go; and collective security was seen in action, when nine Powers accepted patrol by British and French warships of some five thousand miles of trade routes. It was a triumph for the advocates of the "strong line" and "standing up to the Dictators." From the point of view of Mr. Chamberlain who, while attempting to grapple with the general situation, was ultimately responsible for the consequence of the "firm line" both in terms of our rearmament and of subsequent European understanding the triumph was almost an embarrassment. On the very day that an Italian naval expert, under the pressure of Nyon, was discussing with French and British representatives in Paris Italian co-operation in the suppression of piracy on what was politely called "a basis of parity," Mussolini was being received with totalitarian pomp and circumstance in Berlin: personal misunderstandings of the two Dictators were being set aside, and something like a genuine friendship formed. In execrable German the Duce proclaimed that "the greatest and truest democrats the world knows to-day are in Germany and Italy." The visit was mainly showmanship perhaps; there was little time allowed for real discussion, but, combined with inspired Press comment in Rome

on Nyon to the effect that "as long as Eden is at the head of the Foreign Office we must be on our guard," it must have given Mr. Chamberlain cause for anxious thought. Admittedly, President Roosevelt's remarkable "Quarantine" speech suggested that the U.S.A. might be entering on a new era of benevolent intervention in European affairs, but a further examination suggested that it was primarily for home consumption. In its clear demarcation between 90 per cent of the states wanting to live in peace and 10 per cent wanting to disturb it, it tended rather to provoke the dictators than to reassure the Democracies; in other words, its probable consequence would be to harden the dangerous ideological differences in Europe. Such is almost always the unfortunate yet unavoidable result of pronouncements by Presidents who through no fault of their own are compelled like the horses of the Psalmist to smell the battle from afar off.

Mr. Chamberlain's acknowledgment of Mr. Roosevelt's "clarion call" was contained in an impressive speech to the Conservative Party Conference at Scarborough. It was a model of discreet enthusiasm. In a reference to the Far Eastern situation and to the summoning by the League of a conference of the Signatories to the Nine Power Treaty, he assumed "after the President's speech" that the United States Government would consent to be represented at that Conference. Beyond that, Mr. Chamberlain made it abundantly clear—too clear perhaps—that the country's defences ruled out the possibility of heroic initiative on our part for some time to come. Of the rearmament plan he confessed "I must frankly admit that progress is not yet as fast as I should like or as it soon will be." An immense amount of preparatory work was necessary—perfection of designs, determination of priorities, esti-

mates and contracts—before production could proceed smoothly and quickly. "I am glad to say that this preparatory stage is now practically completed and that production has begun in earnest." His audience cannot have been surprised to learn, accordingly, that Mr. Chamberlain was still waiting for the Italian reply to our proposals of July 14th and earnestly trusted it might be of such a character as to bring us into greater harmony. A solution of the Spanish problem, he revealed, would open the way to "those conversations which were the subject of the recent correspondence between Signor Mussolini and myself." Actually Mussolini was already taking his time considering an invitation sent to him on October 2nd from the French and British Governments to take the withdrawal and recognition question out of the Non-Intervention Committee and to settle it by Tripartite talks. On October 10th he politely declined, and three days later the three Governments were all agreeing to begin again within the framework of the Non-Intervention Committee. Mr. Eden's speech at Llandudno was an effort to palliate the British Government's acquiescence by a show of purpose. The words he used were double edged and reflected more clearly his own anxiety at the possible outcome of our policy. We might be justified in using our freedom of action. "We are ready and eager to make new friends, but we will not do that by parting with old ones."

A few days later, the Prime Minister winding up a debate in Parliament on the Government's Foreign Policy was able to pour oil on the troubled waters as far as Italy was concerned, though what he had to say was extremely unpalatable to an Opposition that had lost both its patience and its sense of proportion. Mussolini had gone so far as to confess

to 40,000 Italian volunteers, and proposed, as a last expedient to end the deadlock, that all parties should agree to proportionate withdrawals in advance of adding up the actual numbers there. This was by no means good enough for the Labour Party whose spokesman, Mr. Grenfell, went so far as to demand that we should insist on the Duce removing all his 40,000 volunteers from Spain within fourteen days on the grounds that they had no right to be there. This simple thesis roused Mr. Chamberlain to undertake a rare excursion into the realms of political philosophy. "What does the Hon. Member mean by Foreign Policy?" Mr. Chamberlain asked. "You can lay down sound and general propositions. You can say that your foreign policy is to maintain peace; you can say that it is to protect British interests, you can say that it is to use your influence such as it is, on behalf of the right against the wrong, as far as you can tell the right from the wrong. You can lay down all these as general principles, but that is not a policy. Surely if you are to have a policy you must take the particular situations and consider what action or inaction is suitable for those particular situations. That is what I myself mean by policy, and it is quite clear that as the situations and conditions in foreign affairs continually change from day to day, your policy cannot be stated once and for all if it is to be applicable to every situation that arises." The House has rarely heard so frank and naked an anti-thesis between Foreign Policy and the general principle underlying it. It is all very well for Sir Eyre Crowe or Sir Robert Vansittart to present confidential memoranda to Ministers in this heartless idiom; the Minister is expected to deck it out in a suitable disguise. Mr. Chamberlain did his country a service at a grave moment in its history

on the eve of recurrent and deepening crisis in showing his distaste for this convention which for years had been a deception both to ourselves and to those nations whose understanding and confidence we sought.

For Mussolini's benefit Mr. Chamberlain made it plain that the Head of the British Government was no longer going to allow the bewitching formulæ of the League to conceal the facts of its impotence. The League was not an end in itself, it was a means towards an end. "If the League is temporarily unable to fulfil its function to achieve that end, what is the use of repeating parrot-like that we believe in the League?" These were brave words, for the parrots were many and powerful and were by no means confined to the Opposition. Then again, the Premier refused to be deflected from his policy because of suspicions he might justifiably have of Italian good faith. "If in foreign affairs you are always going to begin with the assumption that the other party is not going to hold to anything that he promises you will not make much progress." Mr. Eden's "patience and persistence" appeared to be fully justified by events. In addition he denounced as "unfounded" the "very serious suggestions" that the Italian Government would for military purposes cling on to the Balearic Islands after all the volunteers had been withdrawn. He quoted Mussolini's repeated and most categorical assurances on this point. In short, he used the occasion to the best advantage to make up the ground that had been lost since the July letter. As for the Far East we would attend the Brussels Conference with our hands free. It was a mistake to go into it talking about economic sanctions, economic pressure and force. "We are here to make peace not here to extend the conflict." All the same

it was largely because the delegation to the Brussels Conference had no economic or military sanctions up their sleeves and were too sensitive even to broach the subject, that the negotiations broke down almost before they had begun, and Japan was in no way deterred. Indeed, the fiasco at Brussels must have been an encouragement to militarists everywhere, and the only lesson to be drawn from it was that it represented the complete and final collapse of arbitration under League auspices.

For Mr. Eden Brussels was a considerable personal defeat, and, in addition, during his absence Mr. Chamberlain was taking stock of the general position when an invitation was sent to Viscount Halifax by General Goering in his capacity as Chief Huntsman of the Reich to attend a big hunting exhibition in Berlin. Lord Halifax was uncertain whether he should go, but Mr. Chamberlain decided that here was the opportunity and now was the time to carry his policy of direct contact with the Dictators to its logical conclusion. Italy had just put her signature to the Anti-Comintern Pact. On the other hand reports of a recent visit of Ribbentrop to Rome implied that the Germans were anxious that the Italians should avoid further grave differences of opinion between themselves and the democracies. Germany did not wish unduly to alienate British goodwill and damage a satisfactory trade balance with the Empire. United States competition in South America was making it essential for German business to develop relations with the British Commonwealth. American journalists were quick to seize on rumours that this move implied a serious divergence of view between the Premier and his Foreign Secretary, and one diplomatic correspondent wired New York that Mr. Eden had actually handed

in his resignation and only decided to hold on after intense pressure on Mr. Chamberlain's part. The evidence is not yet available to us, but on the whole it would seem that although the Hitler-Halifax talks would never have been initiated by Mr. Eden and lacked his approval he did not actively oppose Mr. Chamberlain in the Cabinet until he knew the details of the conversations and Mr. Chamberlain's reaction to them.

When Lord Halifax finally reached the Fuehrer's mountain eyrie he received as unpleasant a shock as Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden during their Berlin visit in 1935. Herr Hitler it seemed was prepared to rejoin the League provided the Covenant was redrafted, sanctions deleted, and its origins in Versailles removed. This meant revision of minority treaties, the recognition of Italy's conquest in Abyssinia and reorganization of Czecho-Slovakia on a Swiss cantonal basis. Further Britain must undertake to refrain from giving Austria any diplomatic or military assistance. Hitler in return would shelve his colonial claims for a given number of years, and if we would give *de jure* recognition of General Franco he would take steps to restore peace in Spain. He would also mediate in the Far East. Hitler demanded in effect a free hand in Central Europe, and in doing so significantly linked up the Austrian and Czech questions; a plebiscite for Austria and regional autonomy for the Sudeten Germans were to be one part of the general process of ensuring the expansion and security of the Third Reich. According to a political commentator "he attaches most importance for the moment to the solution of the Austrian problem in a sense favourable to Germany." Lord Halifax wisely took refuge in the informality of the occasion and virtually refused to commit himself even to an opinion on

the proposals though he admitted Germany's predominant interests in Central and Eastern Europe. To these proposals the Cabinet's first reaction was not unnaturally unfavourable, and Mr. Eden's position was correspondingly strengthened.

How was Mr. Chamberlain reacting? In the light of subsequent history there is little doubt that Lord Halifax's report of his visit finally made up his mind in favour of appeasement, in other words, of the avoidance of British action in Europe, which would prevent the legitimate and ordered fulfilment of Herr Hitler's aims. A policy of fulfilment would have been a fairer estimate and profounder analysis of Mr. Chamberlain's policy from the Hitler-Halifax talks to Munich. There was sufficient evidence before him that Mussolini had already given his assent to Hitler's claims against the Czechs and was now ready to acquiesce in the liquidation of Austria. Under the most favourable military conditions the state of our preparedness would make a trial of strength with Hitler undesirable for some time to come. With Mussolini in line with Hitler and Poland eager for gain the defence of Austria by Britain and France was a virtual impossibility, while that of Czecho-Slovakia would involve not simply Stalin's co-operation but his active initiative. Rather let Britain give Hitler no excuse for settling her difference with Vienna and Prague other than by peaceful methods. If Hitler could grasp this opportunity Europe might be standing on the threshold of a new era of goodwill and co-operation. At a great mass meeting at Edinburgh less than a week before Lord Halifax's departure for Germany Mr. Chamberlain asserted that "it is time another effort was made to see if it is possible to remove the fears and suspicions that every country seems to have about its neighbours by a closer examination of

their origin and substance. Such an effort is not a sign of weakness. The country is strong. She is getting stronger every day. Our very strength makes it easier for us to appeal to others to join us in applying our common sense, our common humanity to the solution of these problems which carry with them such tremendous possibilities for happiness or for misery to the future of the human race."

At the end of November, Mr. Chamberlain invited M. Chautemps and M. Delbos, the French Premier and Foreign Secretary, to consider with him the Hitler-Halifax conversation; Parliament, still officially unaware of the form it had taken and somewhat piqued at Mr. Chamberlain's refusal to give even a hint of its nature was reassured to learn that there was no weakening of the London-Paris axis. M. Chautemps had a far more realistic sense of compromise than the unfortunate Blum and there was a considerable measure of support for Mr. Chamberlain's initiative in exploring the possibility of a stable agreement with Germany. Within limits M. Chautemps made it clear that France was ready to endorse a British move giving recognition in principle to the German claims for colonial equality. However, French complacency could be obtained only if Germany respected the territorial clauses of the peace treaties, in particular those affecting Czecho-Slovakia. Blum's departure brought an end to the era of cloud-capped fancies that had distracted French policy with the election of the Popular Front to office, but the Parties making up that curious coalition were still in power and were closely allied to political circles in Prague. Delbos in particular was adamant that on the day that France abandoned Czecho-Slovakia she would lose Russian co-operation as well. With regard to Austria the Quai d'Orsay harboured the illusion up to a late hour that Italy

would continue to defend Austrian independence and that the problem was accordingly not so acute. The communiqué issued after the talks with the French Ministers showed that appeasement was prominent on the agenda, but that the French had not as yet fully appreciated its implications. M. Delbos was on the eve of what was to be a grand if fruitless tour of Central Europe. He was above all anxious to tell the nerve-racked statesmen receiving him that the *status quo* in their part of the world had the complete and unequivocal backing of Great Britain. The communiqué whittled down this plea by simply noting the two Governments' "common interest" in the maintenance of peaceful conditions in those parts of Europe. There was nothing to be done but for Mr. Chamberlain to watch for further openings that would lead to effective reconciliation of the four great Powers of Western Europe.

The year was to close in an atmosphere of anxious indecision. The Far Eastern situation had taken a turn for the worse with bombing attacks on four British warships in the Yangtze and with the sinking of the *Panay*, which had infuriated American opinion. On November 6th Italy had solemnly joined the Anti-Comintern Pact; if these outrages in the Far East were the first fruits of the new world alliance it was more than ever necessary to reach the roots of aggression everywhere. Mr. Chamberlain put forward his concept to the House of Commons in a comprehensive review of the international situation during the last foreign affairs debate before the Christmas vacation. The Hitler-Halifax talks were to be regarded "as a first step towards a general effort to arrive at what has been sometimes called a general settlement." On the whole the Prime Minister could take satisfaction

that he had seen Britain through a most dangerous year without committing her to any irreparable action or decision. The obstinacy with which the Opposition required him to take up arms for peace in every corner of the globe without reference to the military implications or the state of our preparedness actually helped Mr. Chamberlain to develop his arguments in favour of caution and patience. The more he was challenged the more adept he became in handling his theme, and the more easily he was able to convince the country at large that he possessed the requisite Nestorian qualities in dealing with those for whom opposition had become synonymous with irresponsibility. "The Opposition," he declared in this Christmas debate, "are living in an unreal world." And the nation agreed.

Summing up the year's work Mr. Churchill felt bound to say that under the usual appearance of Party and Parliamentary bickerings there was a greater measure of unity upon essentials in the French and British nations than had ever been known in time of peace. There was no need for us to feel unequal to the stresses of 1938. The only certainty about the Spanish War was that it was eating up Italian resources. Whatever the final outcome of the struggle, there was no reason to believe that Britain would be without influence or popularity at the end. Japan was daily becoming more deeply involved. The Anti-Comintern Pact was, in the last resort, testimony of the Dictators' fears and weaknesses. As for our resources the British Navy was considerably stronger as compared with other European fleets at the end of 1937 than it was in 1914. The launching of the National Fitness Campaign on the one hand and of the Air Raid Precautions Bill on the other were alike signs that the Premier was vigilant for the nation's health in peace and

survival in war. In the sphere of trade balances Mr. Chamberlain could build upon impressive statistics to show what five years of Ottawa had meant for the Empire. Our imports during that time to the Ottawa countries had gone up from £177,000,000 in 1932 to £250,000,000 in 1936, an increase of 41 per cent; while our exports rising from £100,000,000 to £147,000,000 in the same period were up by 48 per cent. "If our critics had been right," Mr. Chamberlain added, "we should expect to find that this increase in Imperial trade would be offset by a corresponding decrease in our trade with foreign countries. Between 1932 and 1936 our exports were up from £200,000,000 to £224,000,000 and our imports from £453,000,000 to £516,000,000." There could be no more impressive evidence of Mr. Chamberlain's stewardship. Economic co-operation with the United States was, following Mr. Chamberlain's welcome announcement of the opening of negotiations for an Anglo-American trade pact making steady and detailed progress. Only with regard to Palestine was the immediate prospect gravely disquieting. The Royal Commission Scheme to partition the country was not acceptable either to Jews or Arabs. Once again, however, Mr. Chamberlain's tactics of delay, and reconsideration, were most likely to provide a peaceful way out of what was fundamentally an insoluble problem. Here was a record of positive achievement and an accumulation of actual and potential assets with which after seven months as Premier Mr. Chamberlain could be well satisfied. He could meet the dangerous future with a calm confidence.

1938 opened quietly with a comparatively uneventful January. Among the New Year honours was a G.C.B. for Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, which involved



FAMILY AFFAIRS

The christening of Neville Chamberlain's granddaughter, Anne May Lloyd,
November 1938

his promotion from that post to a new and hitherto unheard-of status of Chief Diplomatic Adviser. There was general speculation on the meaning of the move which once again gave rise to rumours that Mr. Chamberlain intended to take a more active part in Foreign Policy and that there were growing divergences of view between the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. On these assumptions Sir Robert, as a champion of Mr. Eden, who was always regarded as a Foreign Office man, was being kicked upstairs to make room for other leading Civil Servants, such as Sir Horace Wilson with whom the Premier could consult informally and on the same terms as with the new Diplomatic Adviser. In France there was perhaps a more significant realignment; a further internal convulsion in the Popular Front had opened the way to Radical Socialist leadership in the near future. Then on February 4th Hitler announced a reconstruction of the German Cabinet, Diplomatic Service and Army command by which he became the effective head of all three. It is beyond the range of this book to enter into the details of his dramatic decision which had its origins in the marriage of Field-Marshal Von Blomberg to his typist. We have no less an authority than Sir Nevile Henderson for the view that from this marriage, which provoked a feud in the army, which in its turn gave Hitler his pretext to remove all moderate and critical elements from his entourage, sprang all subsequent ills. From now on we had to reckon with a Germany in which the extreme Nazi elements had considerably more control over the framing of policy than ever before: Neurath, Fritsch and Blomberg were all removed. The result of Hitler's action was soon to be felt.

On February 12th—and for an understanding of the sensational yet still essentially obscure develop-

ments of the next few weeks the date sequence is particularly important—the unfortunate Dr. Schuschnigg had his terrifying meeting with Hitler and the German Generals at Berchtesgaden. Just how soon Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay knew the exact terms of the Fuehrer's ultimatum it is difficult to say. From the tenor of Lord Halifax's information both Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden must have been able to give a fairly accurate estimate of what had taken place. That evening Mr. Eden addressed a mass meeting of Young Conservatives in Birmingham, and encouraged perhaps by the character of his audience, exclaimed defiantly "in any agreements we make to-day there must be no sacrifice of principles and no shirking of responsibilities merely to obtain quick results." The more lively sections of the British Press interpreted this as a further symptom of difference of opinion in the Cabinet between the Premier and Foreign Secretary. For a week or so the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* in particular had been circulating the story of an impending Cabinet crisis brought about by Mr. Eden's attitude. On February 14th Sir Archibald Sinclair, Opposition Liberal Leader, interpreted Mr. Eden's Birmingham speech as "a bold answer" to "those powerful forces in the Conservative Party which are urging Mr. Eden to reach an agreement with Signor Mussolini on the basis of recognizing the Italian conquest of Abyssinia and of a loan to enable him to reap the fruits of an invasion which the League and world opinion have denounced as a crime." On February 17th, however, Mr. Churchill wrote in the *Evening Standard* that Mr. Eden's words at Birmingham could be taken to represent not only the views of the Foreign Secretary but those of Mr. Neville Chamberlain as well. On the same day the important Foreign Affairs Committee of

the Conservative Party met and apparently argued in favour of vigorous action to meet the general situation and in particular the alarm caused by the Nazi threat to Austria.

Even as late as Friday 18th, two days before Mr. Eden's resignation, the outward and visible signs were peaceful. Mr. Eden spoke that night at Kenilworth and Mr. Chamberlain in Birmingham. There was no hint of a split. Behind the scenes, however, there was unusual activity; for a fortnight Count Grandi had been in constant touch with the Government and on this Friday discussions came to a head. The Italian Ambassador could still not offer any concrete proposal about the withdrawal of volunteers. For his part he wanted the acceptance in principle of general negotiations with Rome that night; Italian participation in the Spanish War should be left to the Non-Intervention Committee, the British formula of withdrawal would be acceptable to Italy as determining the point at which belligerent rights should be granted. There was a subsequent meeting with Grandi at which it was not so clear that Italy would agree to the British proposals unless the British Government would allow the general discussion. It was at this second meeting, it would seem, that Mr. Eden gathered the impression that the Cabinet was being subjected to a threat. Mr. Chamberlain for his part felt that this opportunity of a comprehensive Mediterranean settlement was altogether too good to miss and, without being able to offer Grandi a definite answer until the Cabinet's approval had been obtained, promised to put the matter before it the following day. When the Cabinet met it was undoubtedly surprised to learn as it did of the deep division of opinion between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden on the next step to be taken by the Government. The position was

further complicated by the fact that on the following day, Sunday February 20th, Hitler was due to make an important speech to the Reichstag.

The Cabinet sat for just on three and a half hours on the Saturday; by then it was clear that the Foreign Secretary was bent on resignation. His approach to the Spanish question had hardened into one of basic principle as to our relations with foreign governments in general and dictators in particular. In addition he was putting forward the view that Grandi and Mussolini were working for his removal and had virtually made it a condition of successful negotiation with Britain. The Foreign Office was being ostentatiously and irregularly left out when the Italians communicated with us. However sympathetic the members of the Cabinet might feel they had necessarily to keep in mind the latest developments in a situation which was clearly not confined to Spain and Italy. On Sunday afternoon Herr Hitler spoke: the contents were dull and heavy, but full of vague menace, and he used the occasion to mention Mr. Eden by name and pour contempt on his policy. Members of the Cabinet now pressed Mr. Eden to reconsider his decision in the light of this speech. It would now be urged abroad, and Germany would certainly not discourage the rumour, that Britain's Foreign Secretary had been sacrificed by the Cabinet in response to Herr Hitler's demand. This would not be in the national interest; various formulæ were worked out, but they were of no avail; Eden decided to take his stand.

In many respects he was wise to go when he did. From his own point of view the implications of Mr. Chamberlain's direct diplomacy were contrary to his League upbringing and to what his public expected of him, and from Mr. Chamberlain's point of view if he had managed to agree to a formula

his presence would only have been an embarrassment. Mr. Eden and Signor Mussolini were still too sore and aggrieved by the memory of previous affrays to regard each other with that detachment and realism which Mr. Chamberlain was demanding. For Mr. Chamberlain himself the crisis was one of the utmost gravity. It argues as much for his courage as for his conviction that he was prepared to see it through. The difficulties were great. He was of course perfectly entitled to override his Foreign Secretary. There was sufficient precedent for his action. On him rested the supreme responsibility for the directions of our Foreign Policy. But in assuming such responsibility at such a time he was creating the possibility of a split in national opinion just when above all else he needed the utmost unity. Then again as the man who was remaining in office and carrying on the delicate negotiations he was never in a position to put his case fully and to do justice to himself. This was most unfortunate, as the nation was both roused and mystified by conflicting rumours about the resignation. The man in the street neither knew all the facts nor understood those he did know. Mr. Chamberlain had to live down wholly unjustified suspicion of intrigue, obstinacy and incompetence. Mr. Eden it was said, had the Foreign Office behind him. Mr. Chamberlain was flouting the experts. These rumours were travesties of the facts. Mr. Chamberlain had eschewed intrigue and was showing remarkable resiliency and skill in a department all too new to him.

Undoubtedly his resolve to force through the negotiations with Italy was strengthened by the Hitler speech. It was more than ever necessary if there was to be any attack on what remained of Austrian sovereignty to reinsure Great Britain against

this new "Vienna risk." Such a threat to the balance of Power in Central Europe must be met by strengthening our position in the Mediterranean. If Italy was forced to acquiesce in a German seizure of Austria—and after all, Italy would be bound to take the first brunt if there was any attempt made to stop Hitler—the Duce would almost at one stroke become the junior partner in the Axis; and the need for him to make use of the life lines Mr. Chamberlain was offering would be greatly increased.

Mr. Chamberlain, it would seem, had some trouble with his Cabinet but after informal discussion sandwiched in between official meetings on the Sunday he carried them all with him; of the Junior Ministers only Lord Cranborne followed his chief to political exile. It was a great personal triumph for the Prime Minister. On the Sunday afternoon experienced Press correspondents had expected at least five or six resignations. The explanatory letters from Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden described the essential divergence; for Mr. Eden the issue was "a difference of outlook between us in respect to the international problems of the day and as to the methods by which we should seek to resolve them." Mr. Chamberlain however could only stress that his regret at Mr. Eden's departure was all the greater "because such differences as have arisen between us in no way concern ultimate ends or the fundamentals of our policy." It was simply that Mr. Eden wanted Italy to give special testimonials of good faith before we should negotiate and that Mr. Chamberlain regarded such a demand as impracticable.

In the debate on the Monday the two sides of the case were put forward quietly though in a tense and dramatic atmosphere. Mr. Eden was not very effective. Indeed in the Lobbies afterwards it was felt that Lord Cranborne had been much more

spirited and convincing. It is not possible here to enter into a detailed analysis of Mr. Chamberlain's three speeches, two on the Monday and one in reply to a vote of censure on the next day. If they did not satisfy the Opposition, if their quiet logic actually provoked Socialists, Liberals and some Conservatives to overstate their hostility to and distrust of the Premier, these speeches were a fair appraisal of his general and personal position, and as such left his critics with little tangible material for a feud against him.¹ He made it clear in the first place that his relations with Mr. Eden had always been friendly. Co-operation and understanding between them actually went back to Mr. Baldwin's easy-going days when the Foreign Secretary often used to consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having failed to obtain a clear ruling from the Prime Minister. On more than one occasion Mr. Eden in private conversation had told Opposition speakers that they were barking up the wrong tree if they tried to make capital out of any apparent differences in expression between himself and Mr. Chamberlain. The facts were that Mr. Chamberlain was consistently his staunch supporter in the Cabinet over a long and difficult period.

A second important theme in Mr. Chamberlain's speech was his emphasis on the dangerous suspicions that were constantly springing up in Anglo-Italian relations: our suspicion of Italian motives was equalled only by their suspicion of ours; in his view their logical conclusion would sooner or later be war. What was Mr. Eden's remedy for this deplorable state of affairs? He wanted the British formula for withdrawal of volunteers in Spain to be accepted before conversations should begin. "But when I

¹ Those of the Government back benchers who showed a disposition to side with Mr. Eden against Mr. Chamberlain earned the unkind nickname in the House of Commons of "the glamour boys."

asked him," Mr. Chamberlain added, "whether, if such an acceptance could be obtained from the Italians, he would then be able to agree to the commencement of the conversations, he made it clear that his objections would still remain." Mr. Chamberlain offered, in place of his pedantic insistence on procedure, constructive and practical aims. "I am not here to say that the actions of the Italian Government in the past have been satisfactory to me but I am concerned with the future not the past. I believe that if these negotiations are approached in a spirit of mutual confidence there is good hope that they may be brought to a successful conclusion, but if you are going beforehand to enter upon them in a spirit of suspicion then none of those conditions that you can think of, the initial withdrawal of troops or anything else that my right hon. friend suggests is going to save you. If there is going to be bad faith, there will be bad faith, and no assurances beforehand are going to alter it."

This ripe wisdom—which has been so lamentably overlooked by British political theorists of the post-1918 vintage—was followed up by an elaboration of appeasement. Mr. Chamberlain described how he meant by that word a general settlement within the framework of a Western European Pact. "The peace of Europe," he declared, "must depend upon the attitude of the four major Powers—Germany, Italy, France and ourselves." Should these Powers be content simply to form themselves into two rival blocs a conflict would be the inevitable result—a conflict "which many think would mark the end of civilization. . . . If we can bring these nations into friendly discussion, into a settling of their differences we shall have saved the peace of Europe for a generation." The debate that

followed on the Monday was in the grand manner, full of passion and invective. The long pent-up bitterness between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Chamberlain overflowed when Mr. Lloyd George, relying on the merest fragment of evidence, challenged the Prime Minister's honour and would not give way. Mr. Churchill's paternal feelings for the Government and its leader were from now on sterner and less benign; but throughout the strain and stress of this day and the anti-climax of the next, when Labour moved a vote of censure, no one gave expression to a higher ideal than this *cri du cœur* from Mr. Chamberlain for settlement between the four Powers whose Governments had at their disposal the world's abundance or the world's destruction, and no one offered a more practicable or constructive way out of the diplomatic cul de sac.

Mr. Chamberlain's plea for a Four Power Pact was noted both in Rome and in Berlin, as was his definition of Russia as "partly European but partly Asiatic," and of the League as constituted to-day being unable to provide collective security for anybody. Vienna and Prague were given their notice to cut their cloth according to the available material. "We must not try to delude ourselves," Mr. Chamberlain declared with refreshing frankness, "and, still more, we must not try to delude small weak nations, into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression and acting accordingly when we know that nothing of the kind can be expected." There was no ambiguity or indecision here. Europe was warned.

The great strength of Mr. Chamberlain's leadership had been amply shown during the Eden crisis. Abuse at home merely fortified him. They accused him of going whining to Mussolini; they simply convinced him that they "do not realize the great-

ness of this country." We were powerful enough to be magnanimous and the nation at large did not interpret Mr. Chamberlain versus Mr. Eden as age versus youth, experience versus inexperience, surrender versus standing-up-to-Dictators, but as a contest between a magnanimous and a correct attitude to a problem. Magnanimity and Mr. Chamberlain won and the common sense and moral judgment of the nation approved. Mr. Eden's policy was not possible until Mr. Chamberlain's had been fully tried, and the priceless boon of time had provided the wherewithal to implement it.

APPEASEMENT IN ACTION

IN his Reichstag speech of February 20th, 1938, Hitler had linked the Austrian and Czech problems together. "Over ten million Germans," he declared, "live in two of the States adjoining our frontiers." It was the duty of the Reich to protect "these fellow Germans." While Mr. Chamberlain was announcing the collapse of League guarantees and thus warning both Vienna and Prague, the French Foreign Minister Delbos solemnly reiterated France's resolution to fulfil her Treaty obligations to the Czechs. This pledge was confirmed a few days later by the French Chamber by 439 votes to 2, and was coupled with support for a policy of close co-operation with Britain. In Czecho-Slovakia the Prime Minister, M. Hodza, committed himself to the assertion that German protection of the Sudeten German minority would constitute a threat to Czecho-Slovakia's sovereignty and as such would be resisted. In Austria Chancellor Schuschnigg, confronted with growing Nazi provocation, called his fatal plebiscite which was to "decide" Austria's independence. There was an air of finality about all these events which was not in accordance with the general facts of the situation. Mr. Chamberlain wisely had no part in all this oath taking. Following the vote in the House of Commons of 226 to 99 upholding his policy, he chose Lord Halifax to succeed Mr. Eden as Foreign Secretary. There was no surprise and general approval at the choice.

Some felt that with Lord Halifax in the House of Lords there would be too much strain—particularly during question time—on the Premier's time and resources, but this danger was amply outweighed by the advantage of having a Foreign Secretary who was removed from day to day criticism and routine in the Commons, and who could accordingly give his mind to the big diplomatic issues without undue risk of interruption. Lord Halifax was an ideal colleague, with the Baldwinian ring in his utterances which Mr. Chamberlain's ruthless analytical method lacked and needed. His experience and integrity gave the public the reassuring feeling that Mr. Chamberlain was not piloting the good ship Appeasement through the perilous seas without having at his side the sound and weighty advice of one who was used to rough weather.

On March 7th Mr. Chamberlain was able to give a good account of our rearmament progress in a debate on the fourth White Paper on Defence. Mr. Churchill was pressing for a Ministry of Supply, but Mr. Chamberlain was able to show him how he personally, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, had initiated inquiries, the purpose of which was to establish "the relations of our defence programme with the total resources available to us—resources of man power, of productive capacity and of finance." The implication of Mr. Chamberlain's speech was that although there was need for hurry and though the original estimate of £1,500,000,000 would have to bear a substantial increase, yet everything possible must be done in peace time "to avoid any undue interference with ordinary trade and commerce." Secondly, he gave the impression that fulfilment of our arms programme still lay in the future, still made diplomatic caution imperative. Two days after this speech Von Ribbentrop, now German

Foreign Minister, arrived in London to round off his ambassadorial mission and to discuss Anglo-German relations. In effect he stayed just long enough to check up on British reactions to the sudden and remorseless Nazi invasion of Austria, but Mr. Chamberlain gave no signs by which Ribbentrop would have been justified in forecasting Britain's future attitude to Nazi methods. On the whole Mr. Chamberlain by his silence symbolized the nation's attitude. The British people knew no fundamental objection to the *anschluss* and indeed many felt it should never have been prevented; but the Nazi technique was no way to solve any dispute and merely made all Nazi objectives suspect.

The difficulties in dealing with the Austrian *putsch* were not merely confined to what was happening in Berlin and Vienna. Mr. Chamberlain had to take full account of reactions in Paris and Rome. Not for the first time French policy was paralysed during the decisive hours by a Cabinet crisis. M. Chautemps had resigned on March 10th and Blum had not been able to form an alternative Government until March 13th; by then there was nothing more for France to do than accept the *fait accompli*. For Mussolini the moment was one of extreme peril, but when Schuschnigg rang him up in desperation the Duce sought safety in absence. On March 13th the Fascist Grand Council hid its embarrassment by taking note of the new situation in Austria without directly approving or condemning German action and by stressing Hitler's pledge to the Duce that the Brenner would not be violated. In these circumstances Mr. Chamberlain's statement to a packed House of Commons on March 14th was a model of discretion. "I imagine that according to the temperament of the individual the events which are in our minds to-day will be the cause of regret, of sorrow,

perhaps of indignation. They cannot be regarded by His Majesty's Government with indifference or equanimity. They are bound to have effects which cannot yet be measured." He was the first to realize that the rape of Austria was a crushing blow to Appeasement. For appeasement to succeed, a relaxation of Europe's economic pressure was urgently required; "what has just occurred must inevitably retard economic recovery."

This was no time for hasty decisions or rash words. In this speech, however, Mr. Chamberlain was able to list the various assurances given by Germany to the Czechs. Field-Marshal Goering had given a general assurance to the Czech Minister in Berlin that German-Czech relations were to be improved, "an assurance," Mr. Chamberlain added, "which he expressly renewed later on behalf of Herr Hitler." German troops entering Austria had strict orders to remain fifteen kilometres from the Czech frontier, and Germany, according to Neurath, still considered herself bound by the German-Czecho-Slovak Arbitration Convention which was one of the important annexes of the Locarno Treaty. Once again M. Paul-Boncour for France solemnly declared that she would stand by her obligations to the Czechs. For the moment it seemed that the Nazis might settle down, and Hitler having obtained at one blow and without bloodshed two-thirds of his original demands might be satisfied, and at last play the part of the good neighbour.

These hopes however did not offer Mr. Chamberlain any respite. On March 15th he had to resist demands for an independent inquiry into the administration of the Air Ministry and the state of military aviation: but the Government of the day was responsible for the nation's air defence, and Mr. Chamberlain finally and wisely refused to "share that responsi-

bility" with any committee. Behind this attack was an Opposition manoeuvre to discredit Mr. Chamberlain's Ministers. Lord Swinton, as has been pointed out, had no ready understanding of the showmanship of politics with the result that his record at the Air Ministry was subjected to wholly undeserved criticism. As a member of the House of Lords the misrepresentations which he allowed to grow around himself added to the Premier's already excessive burdens in the Commons, where Mr. Chamberlain was acting in effect not only as Prime Minister but as Foreign Secretary, Air Minister and Supreme Defence Chief. It was in fact a personal responsibility unparalleled in our history.

The next day he was up again to meet what was now a systematized Opposition onslaught on appeasement, this time as applied to Spain. The Socialists now began to associate the word with a sinister Capitalist context and to reduce the argument into terms of their own economic dogmas. In doing so they once again made it all the easier for the Premier to emphasize his disinterestedness as to the outcome of the Spanish War. The plea to keep out of Spain and pursue non-intervention to the end was irresistible, but it was not on Spain that this particular debate continued. The arguments for and against non-intervention were now applied with redoubled vigour to the case of Czecho-Slovakia. *The Times* correspondence columns were opened up, and there was a veritable barrage of opinion and information on the status of the three and a half million Sudeten Germans who made up approximately a third of the diverse population of the patchwork and "scientific" State of Czecho-Slovakia. It is not necessary here to enter into the details of the various grievances of the Sudeten Germans and apologies for the Czech Government which were set out at

this time; the political element in their make-up was for the most part so predominating as to make any estimate of the fundamental rights and wrongs a matter for future historians to extract from the welter of the world crisis which soon enveloped them. They were indeed the pawns in this greater game. The part, for instance, played by Henlein the official Sudeten leader is a good example of the way in which the real grievances in the Czech-Sudeten dispute were bandied about and distorted to meet the wider problem of the European equilibrium. It would certainly seem, however, that the Sudeten leaders were more keenly alive to the implications of a subordinate role than the Czech leaders were. As for the ventilation of the dispute in the Press and elsewhere, it opened the eyes of the public to certain real defects in this so-called advanced democratic experiment and led quickly to general agreement that the existing dispensation was not wholly just in terms either of nationality or self-determination, for which the last world war presumably had been fought. Certainly he would be a rash leader who would be prepared to undertake a second world war to maintain the *status quo*.

On March 24th in the House of Commons Mr. Chamberlain made a declaration on Foreign Policy which was to exercise a formative influence on the European situation right up to the tremendous climax in September, when it was superseded by Mr. Chamberlain's contacts with the Fuehrer. Great play has been made by Mr. Chamberlain's critics with this speech. Their case was that, while giving an impression of exactitude it was too indefinite in tone; but this is to disregard the preamble to its main points in which he speaks of initiating a debate on the "attitude" of His Majesty's Govern-

ment and differentiates "attitude" from "policy," "because I cannot imagine that any events would change the fundamental basis of British foreign policy which is the maintenance and preservation of peace." In elaborating this attitude Mr. Chamberlain first emphasized that his original belief in the League as an effective instrument for preserving peace had been profoundly shaken, but that this was no sudden conversion, and he went back to his statements in June 1936 to vouch for the continuity of his thoughts on the subject of Collective Security. Once again, then, it was useless to try and impose on the League a task which was beyond its powers to fulfil. In the second place, an alternative to the "somewhat slow and cumbrous machinery of Geneva" involving a smaller number of States with limited political interests. Similar diplomatic commitments, and coherent strategy might be more effective in dealing with the "problem of the lightning strokes of modern warlike operations."

Thirdly, in our approach to the Czech dispute, he emphasized that British undertakings to foreign States were under two heads. We had automatic obligations, and we had those under the League of Nations in which arms "may" be used. Because the League's capacity to fulfil its obligations was considerably reduced, it did not mean that His Majesty's Government "would in no circumstances intervene as a member of the League for the restoration of peace or the maintenance of international order if circumstances were such as to make it appropriate to do so." He felt, and with justice, that the course of a dispute would be materially influenced by the knowledge beforehand of the parties concerned that Great Britain's action will be determined in accordance with the principles laid down in the Covenant. Were we however to

promote our undertaking to Czecho-Slovakia into one of special automatic guarantees either by implementing the Franco-Czecho-Slovak Treaty or by making a treaty ourselves and inviting other nations to join it? The answer was a decisive "no"; our vital interests were not touched in the same way as with France and Belgium; the Covenant did not demand it. "For these reasons His Majesty's Government feel themselves unable to give the prior guarantee suggested." On the other hand "where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved and, if war broke out, it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. . . . The inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements." This was an honest and outspoken warning as much to Berlin not to lean too heavily on the logic of facts as it was to Prague not to stand too stiffly by the letter of the law. We were not bound to assist France if France assisted Czecho-Slovakia but both countries might well be involved together, being two countries "with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty and determined to uphold them."

The fourth major point he made was with regard to Russia's proposal, which had been sent to the British, French, and American Governments, for a conference to consider how to deal with further aggression. Mr. Chamberlain turned it down on the grounds that the Soviet Government itself did not seriously expect to bring all European States to it. Accordingly it was not designed to bring about a general appeasement but simply to take counsel against aggression that had not yet taken place. It could only heighten the tendency towards the establishment of exclusive blocs of nations which

Mr. Chamberlain's concept of appeasement was expressly designed to prevent. In some respects the Prime Minister's rejection of Russia's offer was brusque and not calculated to assist further negotiations with the Soviet leaders should the need arise for them, but there is little doubt that the incursion of Russia into this quarrel at this stage would have at once widened the area of what was still only a local problem offering considerable scope for local settlement. In turning down the Russian plan Mr. Chamberlain reminded the world of the basic principles on which Great Britain "considers the peace of the world depends. . . . The first is that differences between nations should be resolved by peaceful settlement and not by methods of force. The second, admittedly of no less importance, is that a peaceful settlement to be enduring must be based on justice." Hitler would have done well to ponder this passage, for having obtained at Berchtesgaden the full measure under the second principle laid down here by Mr. Chamberlain, he did his utmost to jeopardize his legitimate gains by violating the first. As for the Czechs Mr. Chamberlain was bound "to observe with satisfaction" that the Prague Government "are addressing themselves to the practical steps that can be taken within the framework of the Czecho-Slovak constitution to meet the reasonable wishes of the German minority." In addition, for Mussolini's benefit, "His Majesty's Government place full reliance upon the intentions of the Italian Government to make good their assurances." Once more he stressed that there would have to be further development in our arms programme and accordingly implied the need for diplomatic reserve until all steps had been taken "requisite to make this country strong enough to meet whatever call may be made upon it." In the

pursuance of peace with justice force was to be our last resort, not our first.

In many respects this monumental speech is the most comprehensive and significant Mr. Chamberlain has yet delivered. It is typical of the man. There is no ornament in it, no searching after effect; it is straightforward to the point of austerity, it is at once shrewd and honest; above all it is a masterpiece in compression: no European statesman could afford to leave a word out of account, and each phrase needed to be weighed in the balance. It was not self-explanatory, but neither was the situation. The statesmen concerned were left to use their common sense. Mr. Chamberlain had used his in composing this speech. The world's reaction was generally favourable and the grasp and clarity of the man responsible for it was widely noted. He handled the most complicated and delicate of all themes with the same quiet mastery that marked his Budget statements. It was generally accepted that Britain's foreign policy was in the hands of a resolute man. A New York correspondent noted the "roar of cheers from the packed Conservative benches behind him when he mentioned no prior guarantee for the Czechs." All the same the Czechs were not unduly disappointed. M. Hodza saw the speech as a strengthening and intensification of Great Britain's interest in Central European affairs and in spite of fresh difficulties launched a number of new concessions in a Nationality Statute. Less than a fortnight later Mr. Chamberlain was facing bitter Socialist taunts and an official demand for a general election. In his reply he pointed out that he was making his nineteenth full dress speech to the House of Commons on foreign affairs within the space of nine weeks. The wild invective of the Labour leaders demanded severe rebuke and Mr.

Chamberlain did not flinch from administering it. The House finally handsomely rejected the demand by 359 votes to 152.

At Birmingham on April 8th he warned Europe yet again that no one can nowadays guarantee to limit the scope of a war once it has been started. As for dictatorships "there they are. You cannot remove them. We have to live with them." So what was our role to be? For answer he ended his speech on a theme which in terms of the journey to Munich is strangely prophetic. "Do not forget," he exclaimed, "that we are all members of the human race and subject to the like passions and affections and fears and desires. There must be something in common between us if only we can find it, and perhaps by our very aloofness from the rest of Europe we may have some special part to play as conciliator and mediator. An ancient historian once wrote of the Greeks that they made gentle the life of the world. I do not know whether in these modern days it is possible for any nation to emulate the example of the Greeks, but I can imagine no nobler ambition for an English statesman than to earn the same tribute for his country." At Bristol Lord Halifax significantly implemented this concept of mediation by pointing out that any action by the League against Germany would destroy the hope of winning Germany and other states back to European collaboration and would inevitably and finally divide Europe into blocs.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had left nothing undone to explain Britain's attitude. Our goodwill to the Dictators was further exemplified when on April 16th the Anglo-Italian agreement was signed covering all Mediterranean questions affecting the two countries together with British recognition of the Abyssinian conquest. The agree-

ment was to come into effect after the withdrawal of volunteers from Spain. The political significance of this agreement, as Mr. Chamberlain would have been the first to recognize, rested in the general goodwill it helped to generate. As reinsurance against the deliberate malevolence of aggressive Axis designs it was flimsy material, but as a serious effort to define a real community of interest between two Powers which had so much to gain from genuine collaboration it was a considerable achievement. The agreement made a deep impression on Europe and it was widely noted, as an example of Mr. Chamberlain's pertinacity and vigour, that it was all signed and sealed within two months of Mr. Eden's resignation.

Meanwhile the general situation was rapidly deteriorating; but there was one reassuring prospect. A further domestic crisis released France from the Popular Front and the Socialist stranglehold it involved. The Senate Finance Committee had stood firm against its exorbitant economic demands. M. Daladier, the Radical Socialist leader, had succeeded in forming an administration without the help of M. Blum and his friends. M. Georges Bonnet became Foreign Minister. Once again France was rising to her destiny and producing both the men and the unity which makes the incredible mechanism of her politics the wonder of the world—it is a luxury which very few nations can afford. Both Daladier and Bonnet soon grasped the strength of purpose behind Mr. Chamberlain's reserve and diffidence and were soon able to achieve an identity of aim which Blum had never done. It was none too soon. On April 24th Konrad Henlein made his notorious Karlsbad speech in which he put forward his eight demands going far beyond anything that had previously been discussed between the two parties. In addition he openly insisted on a "complete revision

of Czech foreign policy, which up to to-day has led the State into the ranks of the enemies of the German people." The Czech reply was prompt. The State's alliances could not be given up at Henlein's or his sponsor's behest and the domestic programme outlined was too vague to act as a basis for negotiation; The French Government received official notification of this.

It was becoming evident that Hitler was manœuvring to produce a showdown. To meet the new developments M. Daladier and M. Bonnet paid a visit to London on April 27th and 28th, and held an important conference with Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. In discussions on strategy great headway was made. It was agreed that France and Britain should co-ordinate land, sea and air forces. The vexed principle of a unified command was accepted and both nations were to begin at once pooling the purchases of supplies. On the diplomatic side the Governments agreed to differ in their approach to the Czech crisis. The French Ministers stated clearly their Government's intention to fulfil its obligations to Czecho-Slovakia while agreeing with Mr. Chamberlain on the need for urging Prague to grant all possible concessions to the Sudetens within the framework of the Czech constitution. *The Times* account of the talks significantly implied that the French were no longer relying on the Franco-Soviet Pact to reinsure their guarantee and that the British view of that Pact was that "it is a sleeping dog—let it lie." A few days after the visit of the French Ministers Lord Halifax was reported to have told M. Masaryk, the Czech Minister in London, that a memorandum which had been submitted to the Anglo-French Conference did not go far enough.

The Cabinet's attitude during the early part of

May was reported to be in support of the view that if war broke out over the Czech question Great Britain ought not to participate unless Italy actually joined in with the Reich. On May 7th Hitler was received in triumph at Rome, but beyond the stupendous display and the Fuehrer's "irrevocable will" not to violate the Brenner it was difficult to detect any visible evidence that the Axis was unduly reinforced. Up to the third week in May there was a considerable amount of rumour and speculation. Henlein visited London on a very secret mission, met Mr. Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair and even M. Masaryk. On the whole, he created a favourable impression as being a moderate man who was anxious to reach a real settlement, but as lacking the necessary strength of purpose to resist the extremist demands of Berlin. *Démarches* were passed from London to Prague and back again.

Then on May 15th the *New York Herald Tribune* published a dispatch from its London correspondent, Mr. James Driscoll. The writer described how he was "now privileged to shed what can truly be called the official light on the real British attitude." He understood the British to be firmly of the opinion that the Russians and French would not be able to fight for the Czechs. Geography stood in the way. The Russians had shot their best generals. "Nothing seems clearer than that the British do not expect to have to fight for Czecho-Slovakia and do not anticipate that Russia or France will either. That being so, the Czechs must accede to the German demands; if reasonable." Mr. Driscoll's informant had not made up his "official mind" whether a cantonal system would be the best. Frontier revision might be more advisable. "This would entail moving the frontier back for some miles to divorce this outer fringe from Prague and



ENTENTE CORDIALE

Chamberlain and Daladier at the Quai D'Orsay for Anglo-French Conversations, November 1938

marry it to Berlin. A smaller but sounder Czecho-Slovakia would result." So close is his forecast to Mr. Chamberlain's subsequent action and the language so similar to that in the famous *Times* leader of September 7th that it is not impossible that Mr. Driscoll's informant was no less a person than Mr. Chamberlain himself. Lady Astor revealed later, somewhat haltingly, that an informal meeting between the Prime Minister and some foreign journalists had taken place at Cliveden. The article, of course, provided the indefatigable Mr. Geoffrey Mander and other Opposition spokesmen with the opportunity once more to hammer away at the legend of "the Cliveden Set."

It was confidently proclaimed that the Prime Minister was surrounded by a sinister and powerful group who collected each week-end under Lady Astor's roof. They were supposed to symbolize every variety of reaction, investment and privilege, their organ of propaganda was reputed to be *The Times*, and Mr. Geoffrey Dawson its editor to be an important member of the clique. Lord Londonderry and Lord Lothian were often mentioned in connection with it. In point of fact the Cliveden Set was a myth—the merest miasma in the brains of ill-informed Communists with a flair for impressionist propaganda. For instance the Londonderrys and the Astors never had any close political or even social ties, while Lord Lothian, an active Liberal, had been, quite apart from all political considerations, a personal friend of the Conservative Astors over years. Mr. Chamberlain undoubtedly had friends among the guests at Cliveden whenever he stayed there, but it is much more likely that he used the opportunity Lady Astor's week-end parties provided for a chance to relax and get away from political problems altogether. In this case, if he

was indeed the informant of Mr. Driscoll's dispatch, it would have been far better if it had been frankly avowed at once; if he could have seen his way to have been as outspoken to President Benes as he apparently was to the American Press some of the ambiguity of the next four months might perhaps have been avoided, and the Czechs taken in time the requisite steps to meet German demands and retain their sovereignty.

But during the third week-end in May a mysterious crisis which gathered and dispersed in the course of forty-eight hours, profoundly shook the best of intentions, and left Europe's statesmen dismayed. When it was all over, Europe realized that it had been on the brink of war. It was only averted by Anglo-French solidarity in support of the Czech Government and that Government's prompt determination to call up reservists in face of German troop concentrations near the Czech border. A distinguished American commentator has given it as his considered view that war probably was nearer at this moment than it had yet been at any time since the Armistice. The action taken by Britain and France was in several respects similar to that at Nyon, but in both cases, as Mr. Chamberlain realized and as Hitler underlined, the Democracies' bloodless victory only increased the Dictators' resolve to collaborate and reach their objective by some other means and at some other time. The attitude of Poland had been of great importance and was elucidated in response to definite requests from London and Paris. Berlin was told by Warsaw that in the event of Czecho-Slovakia's dismemberment, Polish neutrality could not be guaranteed. Well-informed quarters in the Central European capitals were convinced that it was the British initiative even more than the French that had saved the day.

A formidable alignment of Powers to resist aggression had been created overnight. What Mr. Chamberlain's precise role was in this nebulous May crisis must remain a matter for conjecture. Future historians may well regard in his initiative at the time an explanation of all that follows and the final vindication of his statesmanship. One fact emerged; the goodwill policy towards Italy was beginning to pay a dividend. On May 17th the Duce shocked the world by a harsh refusal to negotiate outstanding differences with France. Italy was on the "other side of the barricades," but by May 21st his disinterestedness in the Czech dispute had become apparent.

The May crisis was followed by all the outward signs of a *détente*. Hodza invited Henlein to change his mind, and they agreed on a basis of negotiations, but, as we know from his subsequent speeches, Hitler now finally resolved that to avoid a second rebuff "serious measures" should be taken. Germany's Air Force was increased and an extension of her Western fortifications was begun forthwith. Mr. Chamberlain as well was seeing to it that the unity and strength of the Commonwealth were ready for all emergencies. At the beginning of May he secured a notable settlement with Eire and Mr. de Valera which, although it alarmed Mr. Churchill and sent that redoubtable strategist back to his Achilles tent, was a signal victory for the policy of appeasement; Lord Swinton resigned from the Air Ministry, and Mr. Chamberlain while paying tribute to his work and pointing to the formidable progress made, reinsured plans for the future by appointing Sir Kingsley Wood in his place. This happy choice gave general satisfaction and Parliament confidence that the Air programme would be vigorously advanced. June saw no major developments, but

on July 2nd Mr. Chamberlain addressing a mass open-air meeting at Kettering—which incidentally gave great offence to farmers with its recommendation to British agriculture to rely on self help—told the world frankly that if our liberties were in danger again and if we were sure that there was no other way of preserving them except by war, we would fight again. However he committed himself to the somewhat misleading platitude that the thought of the 7,000,000 killed and 13,000,000 wounded in the last war led him to the conclusion that war left no winners, only losers.

In spite of these activities, warnings and feelers the Czech situation was steadily deteriorating. On July 9th Henlein visited Hitler, and three days later Daladier spoke of France's solemn engagements to Czecho-Slovakia being sacred and indisputable. Mr. Chamberlain resolved to try a fresh peace initiative in order to break the deadlock. On July 18th the King and Queen paid an elaborate State Visit to Paris. Lord Halifax accompanied their Majesties, and the occasion was undoubtedly used, during completely private negotiations between the Foreign Secretary, and MM. Daladier and Bonnet, with no officials present, to put forward a plan for mediation. Just before leaving for France, Lord Halifax had received Capt. Wiedemann, Hitler's personal *aide*, and at the same time sounded Prague about a proposal to send out a British statesman to act as an adviser and mediator in the Sudeten dispute. Wiedemann was reported to have put forward in a tentative form a counter-suggestion that the four Powers should arbitrate. The British and French Governments subsequently turned the proposal down on the grounds that Germany as a party to the dispute should not arbitrate and that the Czechs would apparently be left out. We were still half a world

away from Munich. How much pressure was put upon Prague to accept is still uncertain, but Lord Halifax apparently intimated that if the Czech Government turned the offer down, the fact that they had done so, and that the offer had been made, would be published by the British Government. It involved no undue interference in Czech affairs. President Benes earlier in the dispute had invited British observers to come and extract for themselves the facts of the Sudeten "atrocities." The French were invited to take part in the mission, but this they politely but firmly refused to do on the grounds that it would undermine confidence in the pledged word. President Benes was not in a position to turn it down, and in spite of the element of pressure no doubt saw advantages in committing Britain to a more active participation in the quarrel.

So the Runciman Mission was hatched. The choice of Lord Runciman for this delicate operation was undoubtedly sound. It had not proved possible to promote him when Mr. Chamberlain took over the Premiership and he was one of the most impressive of the leading Government supporters not on the active list. Mr. Chamberlain's attitude to the Mission was defined in the House of Commons when he replied to charges made by Sir Archibald Sinclair that he was hustling the Czechs. "The very opposite is the truth," he declared; "our anxiety has been rather lest the Czecho-Slovakian Government should be too hasty in dealing with a situation of such delicacy that it was most desirable that the two sides should not get into a position where they were set, and unable to have any further give-and-take between them." Mr. Chamberlain's position was a very strong one *vis-à-vis* the Czechs. Britain's initiative had saved them on May 21st. It was unreasonable for them simply to sit back and

expect Britain to face complacently a repetition of such nerve-racking events. It was up to them to make a considerable concession to the cause of European appeasement. Whatever Sir Archibald Sinclair may have made of Mr. Chamberlain's refusal to let the Czechs be hurried, it would seem that Herr Hitler took it as implying a British manoeuvre to delay effective negotiations until well on in the winter when it would be too late for him to implement his threats with effective military action.

From now on the crisis hastens on to its tremendous climax. Up to this moment Mr. Chamberlain had been forced to watch with equally anxious vigilance the two other crises in Spain and China. As each day passed the policy of non-intervention was more fully justified but more difficult to defend in public against the tide of incidents, provocations and organized impatience. Henceforward these wars, though both are to pass through critical military phases are, as far as Mr. Chamberlain and British policy are concerned, secondary to the overwhelming problem of the future of the Czecho-Slovak State. A day or so after Lord Runciman's arrival in Czecho-Slovakia came news of vast German mobilizations. During the next fortnight more and more alarming reports came through. There was a further serious fall on the Berlin Stock Exchange, until on August 15th Hitler attended the first of a series of manoeuvres which involved the calling up of nearly a million men. By now it was clear that German aims were far more ambitious than merely to sabotage Lord Runciman's efforts at mediation. The Sudeten demands grew proportionately. At the end of July they had embodied their claims in a Memorandum of fourteen points, which included Sudeten autonomy and a share in the government of the whole country. This widened the gap between the Karlsbad Eight

Points and the Czechs' Nationality Statute. Henlein was insisting yet again on Czecho-Slovakia severing her treaties with France and Soviet Russia. About the middle of August the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson, was instructed to warn the German Government that its excessive military activities were threatening the Runciman negotiations and might, to quote Mr. Chamberlain on September 28th, "endanger the peace of every one of the great Powers of Europe." German *real politik* was further revealed in the sharp rebuke Sir Nevile received from Ribbentrop who refused to discuss Germany's military measures and gave it as his opinion that British mediation in Prague "had only served to increase Czech intransigence." (In parenthesis it should be noted that the selection of Sir Nevile Henderson for this most difficult office was Mr. Chamberlain's first important diplomatic appointment. Sir Nevile had to undergo much misrepresentation, but the publication of the dispatches on the Polish dispute shows his calibre and how well justified Mr. Chamberlain was in his choice.)

During the second half of August the situation was dominated by the imminence of the Nuremberg Nazi Rally, and Hitler's speech there which was billed for September 12th. Sir John Simon made an effort to ward off the blow with a much heralded speech at Lanark. It would have been better if this particular oration had not received quite so much advance publicity. It raised expectations inevitably to disappoint them. Sir John could naturally add nothing to Mr. Chamberlain's speech of March 24th. The real background to Sir John's words was the announcement the day before that the majority of the Home Fleet would reach its fighting stations at Invergordon during the week of the Nuremberg Conference.

In the meanwhile the scope of Runciman's activities increased. By the beginning of September his mission had developed from mediation between two sets of Czechs into mediation between the Czechs and Hitler. It is not possible to say whether this development had Mr. Chamberlain's authority or approval for it happened almost imperceptibly. The only way to get to the root of Henlein's case was to send him to his avowed master so that he could collect his instructions. However well founded and indeed inevitable was Lord Runciman's acceptance of Henlein's subordinate status, there can be little doubt that Hitler interpreted it as a sign of weakness and resolved to force the pace. In spite of a further warning from Sir Neville Henderson, the German Press campaign became, to use *The Times'* epithet, "frenzied." On September 4th, however, France was still adamant. Bonnet declared "in all cases France will remain faithful to the Pacts and Treaties which she has concluded. She will remain faithful to the engagements she has made." Two days later the Czechs made the supreme effort to meet the demands and issued what is known as the Fourth Plan. It was a complex and comprehensive document, and with certain modifications would have given fair play to the principles of national self-government within a cantonal framework. Henlein however did not want to examine it. He rushed off to Nuremberg with the avowed intention of avoiding commitments until Hitler had spoken. The Runciman Mission and the Czechs alike had strong hopes that the Fourth Plan would provide a basis for serious negotiation and it was reported in *The Times* of September 7th that "both Paris and London have given the plan their blessing and advised both sides to agree on it."

But it was in this self-same issue of *The Times*

that the now historic "First leader" appeared recommending the Czech Government "to consider whether they should exclude altogether the project which has found favour in some quarters of making Czecho-Slovakia a more homogeneous State by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race." The full implications of this leader—its origin and motive—are still not wholly clear. The Government at once renounced any connection between its policy and that of Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, but the incursion of *The Times* into the negotiations at this delicate stage undoubtedly diverted them from any serious consideration of the Fourth Plan. On grounds of the highest strategy and in order to manœuvre Hitler into accepting a settlement without his fighting for it the Fourth Plan may well have been too leisurely and even too pedantic a document for the urgent requirements of the hour. It is premature even to suggest that this *Times* leader had Mr. Chamberlain's backing; more likely was it Mr. Dawson's intelligent anticipation of Mr. Chamberlain's thoughts on the subject. The immediate outcry in the British Press against it was excessive, and merely served to emphasize that it was the still small voice of peace and common sense timidly suggesting frontier revision without recourse to arms—what the Opposition intellectuals had been advocating for years under the title of Peaceful Change. But behind the clamour was the rising temper of a nation in face of the imminent threat of another European war. The opinion expressed in *The Times* was new, took the public unawares, and it was a dangerous moment for innovation.

A factor constantly in Mr. Chamberlain's mind at this anxious time must have been Italian policy.

Was not the policy of the past year designed to insure Anglo-Italian contact when the moment of crisis came? A communiqué in the *Informazione Diplomatica* appeared on the eve of Hitler's Nuremberg speech clearing the ground for Italian neutrality:—autonomy for the Sudeten minority—yes; but that they should be anything other than within the fabric of the Czech State—no. Nevertheless underlying *The Times* leader was a genuine divergence of view in the Cabinet which was only heightened by a conciliatory speech from Benes and a tirade from Goering on “those ridiculous dwarfs in Prague.” Had not concessions gone far enough? Or should the crisis be allowed to work itself out? The symptoms of a split were noticeable in two contradictory Press interviews given on September 11th. The Foreign Office emphasized to foreign correspondents that Mr. Chamberlain's statement of March 24th meant that “Great Britain could not stand aside from a general conflict in which the integrity of France might be menaced.” In Downing Street Mr. Chamberlain received the British Press and interpreted the speech far less provocatively. In addition there were soon afterwards hurried instructions to the foreign correspondents not to mention the source of their story—for “Foreign Office” read “responsible source.” Mr. Chamberlain was bent upon leaving it to Hitler to monopolize the language of menace. The next day the Fuehrer amply lived up to his expectations. As Mr. Chamberlain himself explained on September 28th “for the first time this speech promised the support of the Reich to the Sudeten Germans if they could not obtain satisfaction for themselves, and for the first time it publicly raised the issue of self-determination.” Half a million men were at work on the Western fortifications, Hitler cried—“the most gigantic that

ever existed," and behind them "a people in arms."

Europe was about to undergo during the next three weeks its sharpest convulsion since July 1914, and for the next year the most tense and sustained crisis in all its history, and from this ordeal Mr. Chamberlain was to emerge as the spokesman for a united nation, as a leader worthy of the highest traditions of our statesmanship.

THE SEEKER AFTER PEACE

SEPTEMBER 12th, the day of Hitler's Nuremberg speech, was given over to rumours and uncertainties in the capitals of Europe. Both in London and Paris it was reported that the Cabinets were divided. From Paris came the news that the French General Staff were standing out for strong action; in Downing Street there had been a full Cabinet in the morning, but late in the evening a meeting of what was soon to be known as the "Inner Cabinet" took place. This informal body consisting of Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare to assist Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax virtually superseded the full Cabinet and took nearly all the big decisions during the next critical fortnight. Mr. Chamberlain was widely criticized for allowing this "dictatorial" innovation which, it was asserted, was alien to the spirit of the British Constitution. Admittedly there was no exact precedent for this Inner Cabinet but it was designed to meet an unprecedented situation. "Designed" conveys perhaps a misleading impression for, as is so typical of British politics, it simply happened; it was the most convenient way of conducting Government policy in view of international developments at all hours of the day or night. The full Cabinet was too cumbrous to keep up with the breathless pace of events during the last fortnight of September 1938. In operating through an Inner Cabinet Mr. Chamberlain was in fact showing the world that democracy was resilient and

could function just as quickly and more smoothly than dictatorships when the challenge came.

It so happened that during the Polish crisis the Inner Cabinet was not invoked, but August 1939 differed from September 1938 in that the time factor was not so acute. The Poles were not working towards a given date announced by Hitler in advance; the Poles only knew of the time limit after it had expired, and, of course, by 1939 the Allied Governments had 1938 to go on, had plans for almost every emergency, were able to grasp more of the initiative, and to take their own time. In 1938 they were improvising. Nevertheless, although there may have been a temptation to revert to the Inner Cabinet again and use it as a precedent, Mr. Chamberlain did not succumb to it: essentially it is part of the unique episode of Munich. The Inner Cabinet on the whole worked smoothly: undoubtedly there must have been differences and frank discussion, but to assert, as has often been done, that Lord Halifax was dragged into acquiescence by a Chamberlain-Simon-Hoare triumvirate is grossly to misread the character of the Foreign Secretary. The Inner Cabinet was in fact characterized by unity of purpose and firm direction; both were urgently needed.

The next day, September 13th, following a number of grave incidents in the Sudetenland the Czech Government declared martial law. The response of the Sudetens was to break off all negotiations and openly demand to return to the Reich. Henlein fled to Germany, and at once began forming a Sudeten legion of about 40,000 men. We have it from Mr. Chamberlain himself in his momentous speech in the House of Commons on September 28th¹ that with Henlein's flight Hitler was contem-

¹ As this speech is Mr. Chamberlain's narrative of events up to the eve of Munich, it is necessary in quoting from it, for the purposes of chronology and sequence, to anticipate its delivery.

plating an immediate invasion of Czecho-Slovakia. "In those circumstances," the Prime Minister asserted, "I decided that the time had come to put into operation a plan which I had had in my mind for a considerable period as a last resort. One of the principal difficulties in dealing with totalitarian Governments is the lack of any means of establishing contact with the personalities in whose hands lie the final decisions for the country. So I resolved to go to Germany myself to interview Herr Hitler and find out in personal conversation whether there was yet any hope of saving the peace. I knew very well that in taking such an unprecedented course I was laying myself open to criticism on the ground that I was detracting from the dignity of a British Prime Minister, and to disappointment and perhaps even resentment if I failed to bring back a satisfactory agreement. But I felt that in such a crisis, where the issues at stake were so vital for millions of human beings, such considerations could not be allowed to count."

It is virtually impossible to convey the lightning effect the news of Mr. Chamberlain's decision to fly to Berchtesgaden early next morning had on public opinion. The most casual of telegrams typical of the man in its bald understatement was the people's first intimation. All they were aware of was that deadlock had been reached, the resources of diplomacy and statesmanship were apparently at an end. Then came the revelation of Mr. Chamberlain, up to that moment a somewhat dim, forbidding and negative personality to the man in the street, breaking down the impenetrable barriers by action breathtaking in its simplicity and courage. For a man of sixty-nine of fixed habits and retiring disposition to enter an aeroplane for the first time in his life, and undertake the rigours of a difficult journey in

order to short-circuit diplomatic hazards and circumlocutions and put the whole issue on a frank direct man to man basis, had about it the quality of genius. As such, the people recognized Mr. Chamberlain's decision. It was no longer a matter of agreement or disagreement. Those who did not understand his views now, as never before, had a bond of sympathy with the man himself. Many who knew the politics of another generation nodded their heads approvingly. "It's Joe over again—it's what Joe would have done," they said. The enthusiasm throughout the world aroused by the news of Mr. Chamberlain's Berchtesgaden visit, at once encouraged M. Daladier to seek reflected glory and take responsibility for having thought of the idea first; and on the 13th it would seem that the French Cabinet did actually urge Mr. Chamberlain to go in view of secret information that had reached it about Mussolini's attitude. As far as Mr. Chamberlain was concerned, the important point was that France had, in spite of all previous protestations about guaranteeing the Czechs, no basic objections to the radical solution he had in mind.

The tiring journey by air to Munich and by train to Berchtesgaden on which the whole world travelled took over seven hours. Mr. Chamberlain had with him Sir Horace Wilson, who by his talents and personality had made such a profound impression on him, and who now was quite the most important figure in our Civil Service, having, in terms of the advice he was called upon to give to Mr. Chamberlain and the Government, reached a status above that of any particular department. Mr. William Strang of the Foreign Office who had accompanied Sir John Simon to Berlin in 1935 and Mr. Eden on his subsequent European Grand Tour, and who probably had more first-hand knowledge of Europe's statesmen

than any other member of the Foreign Office, also accompanied the Premier. The conversations began after a short respite, and lasted for three hours; only an interpreter—the inevitable Herr Schmidt who must have locked away in him most of Europe's secrets since the coming of the Fuehrer—was present besides Mr. Chamberlain and Hitler. If the Prime Minister had been led to hope that there would be a frank exchange of views, he was to be disappointed at once. Hitler does not exchange views with people: he informs them of his views at great length with varying degrees of vehemence. On this occasion he was in the sort of mood that sent Schuschnigg shivering to his doom. Hitler blankly announced to Mr. Chamberlain that he had made up his mind to give the Sudetens the right of self-determination and of returning, if they wished, to the Reich. He would help them to return if they could not do so by their own efforts, and in Mr. Chamberlain's words "he declared categorically that rather than wait he would be prepared to risk a world war. At one point he complained of British threats against him, to which I replied that he must distinguish between a threat and a warning, and that he might have just cause of complaint if I allowed him to think that in no circumstances would this country go to war with Germany when, in fact, there were conditions in which such a contingency might arise.

"So strongly did I get the impression," Mr. Chamberlain added, "that the Chancellor was contemplating an immediate invasion of Czecho-Slovakia that I asked him why he had allowed me to travel all that way since I was evidently wasting my time." This had the desired effect. Hitler promised, if once the principle of self-determination was conceded, to discuss ways and means of putting it into effect. Mr. Chamberlain promised to consult his colleagues

if in the meanwhile Hitler would refrain from hostilities. Provided his hand was not forced by events in Czecho-Slovakia Hitler was ready to give this assurance. "That assurance has remained binding ever since." Mr. Chamberlain declared in his speech of September 28th, "I have no doubt whatever now, looking back, that my visit alone prevented an invasion for which everything was ready. The sole hope of a peaceful solution was to grant the Sudeten Germans self-determination, and that quickly."

The principle upon which the immediate peace of Europe could be established was settled at Berchtesgaden; what remained was a matter of procedure, but on this procedure much depended. If appeasement was to succeed the success could be measured only by the effect it had on Hitler's actions. Mr. Chamberlain, when he arrived back in London on the afternoon of the 16th, was greeted as a peacemaker. On reaching Croydon and to the accompaniment of enthusiastic cheers, he told the Press that he would be back in Germany again in a few days time, and that then Hitler would go half-way to meet him. In London he had an audience of the King and at once entered on discussions with the Cabinet, Inner Cabinet, and Lord Runciman. On September 17th the Cabinet met again and it was strongly rumoured that there was a sharp division of opinion. One school of thought felt deeply that the transfer to Germany of a minority of Czechs within the German minority was indefensible, on the other hand the senior members including Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare and no doubt the Premier himself were firm that we should not allow ourselves to enter into commitments beyond the Rhine.

The next day, Sunday 18th, the Inner Cabinet

met the French Ministers, and the outcome of their deliberations was the so-called Anglo-French proposals by which the Czechs were urged to agree immediately to hand over either by direct transfer or by plebiscite to the Reich all areas with over 50 per cent of Sudeten inhabitants. The proposals provided for an international body to adjust frontiers and exchange populations on an equitable basis. In addition, to meet the inevitable sacrifice the Czechs were called upon to make, France and Britain offered to guarantee the new Czech State against unprovoked aggression to take the place of the old reciprocal military obligations. A reply was called for at the earliest possible moment as the Prime Minister must resume conversations with Hitler not later than Wednesday, and earlier if possible. Behind these proposals was, as Mr. Chamberlain pointed out, "the desire to find a solution which would not bring about a European war, and, therefore a solution which would not compel France to take action in accordance with her obligations." Thus the importance of the proposals was that through them France was enabled under the ægis of Mr. Chamberlain's peace initiative to accept the principle of self-determination of the Sudeten Germans. With this French defection there was nothing for the Czechs to do but to give way. Benes sought desperately for a compromise that would allow France and Britain to reconsider their decision, and asked for arbitration under Locarno. This however was unacceptable, and in the early hours of Wednesday morning the British and French Ministers hurried to the Hradcany Palace for an interview with Benes in which they pointed out once and for all to the Czecho-Slovak Government that "there was no hope of a peaceful solution on this basis," and asked for acceptance of the Anglo-French proposals uncondi-

tionally and immediately. Benes gave way and the Hodza Government resigned to be superseded by an administration under General Syrový, head of the Army.

With Benes's compliance an Independent Czechoslovakia signed its own death warrant. The tragedy of Prague during these bitter days must not be glossed over, and Mr. Chamberlain did not attempt to do so. To Benes and the Czech Government he paid a tribute which he no doubt deeply felt. They paid the price of Peace: on the day the Czechs gave way, Lord Runciman's report was addressed to Mr. Chamberlain, and although by now its observations had little more than an academic interest, they did serve to underline the need for a realistic rather than a sentimental approach to the problem as a whole. The Sudeten leaders had undoubtedly been responsible for the final break, but the Czech rule of the German areas which had been handed over to them in 1919 "while not actively oppressive and certainly not terroristic has been marked by tactlessness, lack of understanding, petty intolerance and discrimination to a point where the resentment of the German population was inevitably running in the direction of revolt."

Czech compliance leaning heavily as it did on the Anglo-French guarantee did not however clarify the position. Mussolini's attitude, ambiguous on September 18th, had hardened four days later into a clear threat to the Democracies. "Italy is ready to take up arms at Germany's side if a mad conflagration should explode"; Poland and Hungary were demanding immediate satisfaction by transfer of their historic minority grievances against the Czechs; Russia openly maintaining her readiness to save the Czechs was rather more vehemently denouncing the Anglo-French "betrayal."

Thus Mr. Chamberlain's second journey to Germany—this time to the Rhine Spa of Godesberg—was undertaken in an atmosphere charged with threats and forebodings. Sir Horace Wilson and Mr. Strang were with him again but with the addition of Sir William Malkin, the Foreign Office drafting expert. Once again Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain conferred together alone, save for the interpreter, for about three hours. The news emerged that it was agreed that Hitler should annex the predominantly German areas, but methods and timing were still in dispute. Not everyone realized how much was at stake on this problem of military occupation and Hitler's patience; when the meeting broke up on the Thursday night it was believed that the hitch was only of a minor and technical character. As the hours wore on, it became apparent that the divergence was serious. Tension over the Godesberg talks increased. Then the truth came out; a second meeting arranged for Friday morning between the Fuehrer and Premier was postponed. Mr. Chamberlain was refusing to renew the conversations until the situation had been clarified. He was drafting a letter to Herr Hitler. Hitler had in fact turned down the Anglo-French proposals as a whole and substituted for them a Memorandum of his own. Mr. Chamberlain described the profound shock to him of Herr Hitler's provocative and prevaricating tactics. So the feverish negotiations between London, Paris and Prague were to be of no avail? "I had been told at Berchtesgaden that if the principle of self-determination were accepted Herr Hitler would discuss with me the ways and means of carrying it out. He told me afterwards that he never for one moment supposed that I should be able to come back to say that the principle was accepted. . . . I felt I must have a little time to consider what I was to

do. Consequently, I withdrew, my mind full of foreboding as to the success of my mission. I first, however, obtained from Herr Hitler an extension of his previous assurance, that he would not move his troops pending the result of the negotiations. I, on my side, undertook to appeal to the Czech Government to avoid any action which might provoke incidents. I have seen speculative accounts of what happened in the next day, which have suggested that long hours passed whilst I remained on one side of the Rhine and Herr Hitler on the other, because I had difficulty in obtaining this assurance about the moving of his troops. I want to say at once that that was purely imaginary." Out of all the disillusionment Mr. Chamberlain had grasped at the essential; the undertaking that the armies would not move was still valid: the door to negotiation was not yet bolted and barred.

"We had arranged to resume our conversation at half-past eleven the next morning but in view of the difficulties of talking with a man through an interpreter and of the fact that I could not feel sure that what I had said to Herr Hitler had always been completely understood and appreciated by him, I thought it would be wise to put down on paper some comments upon these new proposals of his and let him have them some time before the talks began." Mr. Chamberlain asked Hitler outright in his letter if he would be satisfied with the agreed areas becoming "part of the Reich at once in principle" and then very shortly afterwards by formal declaration, thus removing the pretext for an immediate military occupation which in England "would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force," which might cause the Czechs to resist, and which "would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together—an

orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force." Mr. Chamberlain was prepared to go so far as to suggest that the responsibility for law and order in the Sudetenland during the interim period should be in the hands of the Sudetens themselves which was beyond what the Czechs had agreed to or he had asked of them. Hitler's reply must have helped to strengthen Mr. Chamberlain's suspicions that he was deliberately seeking grounds to launch a war on the Czechs, and that his declaration at Berchtesgaden that he was prepared to face a European conflict far from being bluff was almost understatement.

In perhaps the most insolent communication ever handed by one head of a Government to another the Fuehrer announced, "The situation is unbearable and will now be terminated by me." Mr. Chamberlain was dabbling with "political imponderables"; he, Herr Hitler, was concerned only with "primitive right." As one commentator has put it, "Chamberlain had come to Godesberg determined to have peace at almost any price. It looked as though Hitler were determined to have war at almost any price." Behind Hitler's bluster was a shrewd instinct: the policy and method he was adopting sooner or later involved a direct challenge to the security and existence of the Allied Parties. From Hitler's point of view this was the moment to force the issue, to make them accept the challenge. British and French rearmament was on such a scale that the opportunity would never recur. In addition Germany had reached the peak of production. There would shortly be a falling off in supplies and increased economic tension. Self-interest and idealism alike required Mr. Chamberlain to go to any length to prevent the incredible yet shrewd fanatic from releasing the controls and

launching war on Europe. Mr. Chamberlain did not fail at this terrible moment. With quiet dignity he acknowledged Hitler's letter by ignoring the abuse. "In my capacity as intermediary," he replied, "it is evidently now my duty since your Excellency maintains entirely the position you took last night to put your proposals before the Czecho-Slovak Government." He asked for a copy of the Memorandum with maps, and for a third time, for an assurance that no military force would be used while the Memorandum was considered.

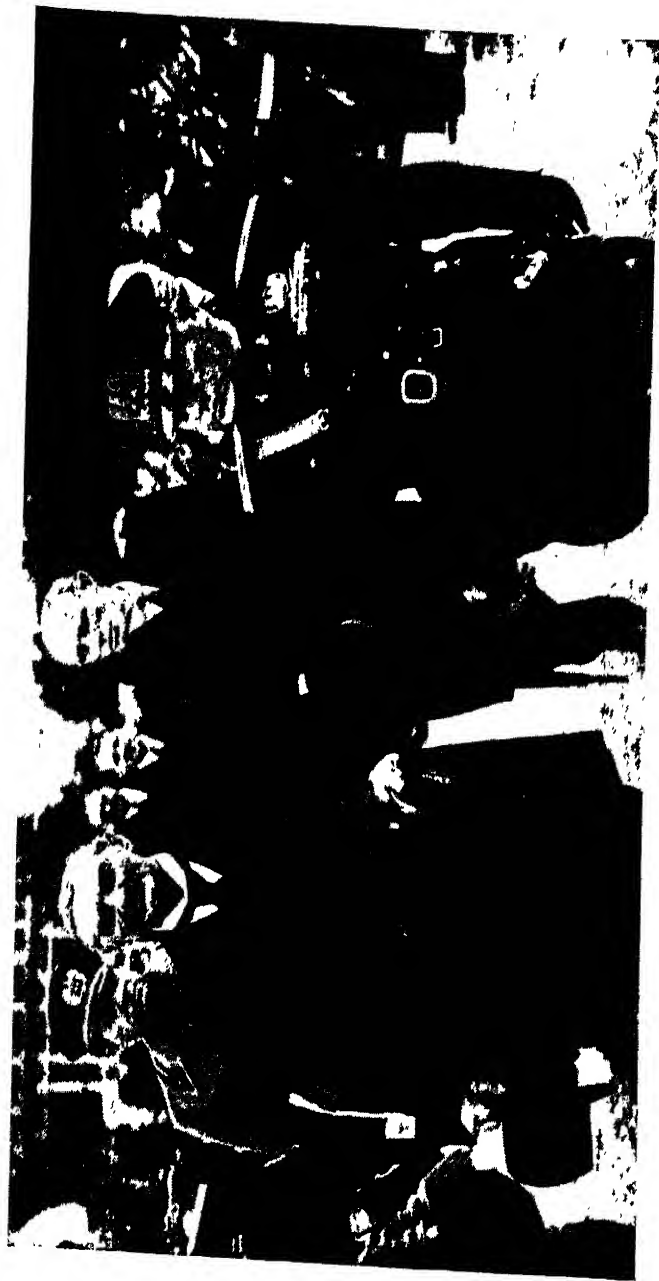
At last Mr. Chamberlain took the offensive. "The Memorandum and the map were handed to me," Mr. Chamberlain records, "at my final interview with the Chancellor, which began at half-past ten that night and lasted into the small hours of the morning, an interview at which the German Foreign Secretary was present, as well as Sir Neville Henderson and Sir Horace Wilson; and for the first time, I found in the Memorandum a time limit. Accordingly on this occasion I spoke very frankly. I dwelt with all the emphasis at my command on the risks which would be incurred by insisting on such terms, and on the terrible consequences of a war, if war ensued. I declared that the language and the manner of the document which I described as an ultimatum rather than a memorandum would profoundly shock public opinion in neutral countries, and I bitterly reproached the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts which I had made to secure peace." In spite of these plain words—Mr. Chamberlain might perhaps more suitably have said "because of them"—this conversation was carried on in more friendly terms than any that had yet preceded it.

Afterwards the talk became more general but none the less momentous. "Before saying farewell to Herr Hitler I had a few words with him in private

which I do not think are without importance. In the first place he repeated to me with great earnestness what he had said already at Berchtesgaden, namely that this was the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe and that he had no wish to include in the Reich people of other races than Germans." As for colonies it was an "awkward question" but not one for war. When Mr. Chamberlain received Hitler's letter he felt bound to let the Czechs know that in his view the danger of a general war was imminent. Prague was advised to mobilize. News of the mobilization came through in the middle of the conversations and had a "disturbing" effect on them.

There is little doubt but that after Godesberg in spite of all the Prime Minister's efforts the best informed opinion throughout the world regarded war as virtually inevitable. When asked by reporters whether he thought the situation was hopeless Mr. Chamberlain replied "I would not like to say that; it is up to them (the Czechs) now." But that was not the whole truth. In the period of feverish activity and suspense between Godesberg and Munich it was up to the French. The main difference between the Anglo-French proposal and Hitler's ultimatum was, first, that the ultimatum insisted upon the military occupation of the Sudetenland forthwith up to a new and more extended frontier, and left out any mention of the guarantees of the new Czech State. It was impossible for Lord Halifax in transmitting the document to Prague on September 24th to urge the Czechs either way, but although the immediate decision on peace and war was still with the Czechs it was more than ever a burning issue as to how France and Britain would act once war broke out.

On arrival in London Mr. Chamberlain's report of Hitler's attitude seriously alarmed the French and



ROMAN TRIUMPH

Chamberlain and Mussolini followed by Ciano and Lord Halifax visiting a Fascist Youth Display at the Mussolini Forum in Rome at the conclusion of the vital Anglo-Italian talks, January 1939

British Cabinets, and everything was now made ready for the last emergency. The outward signs were patient cheerful queues for gas masks and the frenzied day and night digging of trenches in parks and squares. Late on Sunday September 25th, Bonnet and Daladier arrived by air, and vital discussions took place that evening and the following morning when General Gamelin joined the French Ministers. The full significance of these discussions has to some extent been overlooked. In the first place, as far as war was concerned, to quote Mr. Chamberlain yet again, "the French Ministers informed us that if Czecho-Slovakia were attacked, France would fulfil her treaty obligations, and in reply we told them that if as a result of these obligations French forces became actively engaged in hostilities against Germany, we should feel obliged to support them." This historic British pledge to France was in due course submerged in the Ministers' ultimately successful search for a peace formula, but it is a significant commentary on French policy that it failed in any way to deflect them from their resolve to see appeasement through. One writer points out that never since the formation of the Entente Cordiale in 1904 had London been willing in time of peace to make such a promise, and speculates on what the French reaction would have been with this guarantee up their sleeve and with the French General Staff confident of victory, if Poincaré had been Foreign Minister. Suffice it to say that Allied Diplomacy had travelled a long way from Poincaré and Viviani in 1914 who, after struggling in vain for a peace-time pledge, finally entered the war without it, to Daladier and Bonnet in 1938 who, in receipt of the pledge without asking for it, proceeded to cast it aside.

Actually the French and British public and Press

only heard officially of the offer on the evening of the 26th through an "authoritative statement" issued by the Foreign Office which declared "The German claim to the transfer of the Sudeten areas has already been conceded by the French, British and Czecho-Slovakian Governments, but if in spite of all efforts made by the British Prime Minister a German attack is made upon Czecho-Slovakia the immediate result must be that France will be bound to come to her assistance and Great Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France." The political background to his announcement is still wrapped in mystery; for instance what degree of understanding, if any, was reached between London and Moscow? From the outset its credentials were questioned. Daladier was reported as saying it had come from "an official of no importance," and Bonnet as that "it lacked confirmation." Only after Munich was safely signed did the French Premier come out into the open about the British pledge. The fundamental importance of the Anglo-French talks September 25th-26th, however, is that during them the idea of a Peace Conference first began to take shape. On the Sunday the Czech Minister was asked to find out in Prague whether, if Hitler could be made to agree, his Government would be willing to meet the German and other interested Governments to discuss a settlement on the basis of the Anglo-French proposals. The Czech reply came through on Monday accepting the invitation in principle.

Everything now seemed to turn on the tone and temper of Hitler's speech at the Berlin Sports Palace that evening. There was general anxiety over this speech, and in the early hours of the morning President Roosevelt addressed direct personal appeals to Hitler and President Benes to settle their controversies by direct negotiation and so save

the peace of the world. The British and French Governments, too, were reminded by the President of their obligations under the Pact of Paris. It was a weighty and well-timed initiative. Mr. Chamberlain also came to the conclusion that a further direct approach in the form of yet another letter to Hitler was indicated in order that he should avoid taking the irrevocable step in the course of his speech. Sir Horace Wilson, who was sent as the Premier's personal envoy on this desperate mission, arrived in Berlin during the afternoon, and with Sir Neville Henderson presented the letter to Hitler at about 4.30.

Mr. Chamberlain largely reiterated the attitude he had taken up at Godesberg in favour of an orderly settlement and against the exploitation of force. "The development of opinion since my return confirms me in the views I expressed to you in my letter and our subsequent conversation." The acceptance of Hitler's demands meant that "Czecho-Slovakia would be deprived of every safeguard for her national existence. . . . The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic and flight." As an alternative approach Mr. Chamberlain formally put up the Conference scheme already accepted by the Czechs. Sir Horace Wilson and Sir Neville Henderson remained with Hitler for an hour. It is possible that during the interview they learnt that Hitler had changed the date of the expiry of his ultimatum from Saturday October 1st to Wednesday September 28th at 2.0 p.m. At all events Signor Attolico, the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, was in a position by 7.30 to give Mussolini this disquieting information. Hitler's general reply to Mr. Chamberlain's appeal was to turn down the Conference offer; the Godesberg demands were final.

In the meanwhile in London, War Office announce-

ments calling up officers and men of anti-aircraft units and coast defence units of the Territorial Army and the decision to summon Parliament for September 28th suggested that Mr. Chamberlain if still undaunted was anticipating the worst. The Hitler speech did not encourage much hope, it was a sombre and sinister tirade (who, listening to it, will ever forget the hyena yells of his Reichstag henchmen when Hitler denounced Benes?—the dragooned hysteria of Hitler's audiences is one of the most horrible yet significant manifestations of Nazism) but behind the bestial anger was a note of canniness. It could be detected in the fact that he never made it clear to the German people that all he was boggling over were technical details, and that all the major points had been conceded to him by the Powers; nor were they told of the feverish military preparations going on in Britain and France to meet the attitude he was adopting. Once again he screamed that he had no territorial claims in Europe. Germany had nothing to ask of Poland or of France. All Germany's neighbours were inviolable. "This is no mere phrase; it is our holy will." The Inner Cabinet met once more to consider both the speech and Sir Horace Wilson's report on his interview, and afterwards Mr. Chamberlain issued a statement to the effect that in as far as Hitler was sceptical we regarded ourselves as morally responsible for carrying out the promises made "with all reasonable promptitude." They were not just Czech promises but primarily British and French; Hitler no longer had any excuse for asserting that we would not underwrite Prague's pledges.

On Tuesday morning Sir Horace Wilson had his second interview with the Fuehrer. Hitler told him that he had not changed his standpoint and gave him official notification that German "action" was

fixed for to-morrow at 2 p.m. Whether "action" meant mobilization or something more final is uncertain. As if to confirm his threat Berlin was the scene of spectacular troop movements all day, and, as one observer remarked, they were particularly noticeable in the neighbourhood of the British Embassy. Sir Horace Wilson, however, on Mr. Chamberlain's special instructions, repeated to Hitler "in precise terms" exactly what a German attack on Czecho-Slovakia would involve as agreed during the Anglo-French talks of September 25th-26th—namely British and French military intervention. Sir Horace Wilson apparently stood up to make his statement and repeated it, this time "at dictation speed." This so enraged Hitler that Sir Horace withdrew from the room for a few moments, only to return and find him calmer and more amenable to reason. Once again Mr. Chamberlain had shown skill in blending his patient conciliation with an impressive display of strength.

By Tuesday evening the general information that was coming in to Mr. Chamberlain was so disturbing that he resolved to broadcast a message to the nation. In this hour of crisis he kept to his own idiom, spoke admittedly with greater conviction, emotion and emphasis than we had ever detected in his voice before, but he used his own simple unadorned language to describe the tremendous task with which he was grappling. He had not it in him to approach his subject in any other way. In truth this man to man talk in its very artlessness showed him as a more effective Democrat, in the Roosevelt sense of the word, than many had believed was possible. One could almost feel the burden of his responsibility as if it was crushing physical weight. He understood the Czech refusal to accept Godesberg but still he felt that if only "time was allowed"

a solution should be possible. Time was everything; if Hitler was only prepared to wait he was *ipso facto* virtually in accord with the objectives of appeasement. Still, we were not yet at war. For the present calmness and perspective should be the watchwords. Our sympathy with the small nation confronted with the big and powerful neighbour must not lead us to risk in every circumstance involving the entire British Empire on its account. "If we have to fight," he concluded, "it must be on larger issues than that. I am myself a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me, but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force I should feel that it must be resisted. Under such a domination, life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living." There was a note of disillusionment in the speech but never of despair, and it was an invaluable contribution to the moral mobilization of the country.

Anticipating still that Hitler's armies would be moving the next day, the public was keyed up to hear dramatic news. It did not have to wait long. First came the Admiralty's announcement that the British Fleet was to be mobilized. An Order in Council declared a state of emergency and authorized the calling up of units of the Auxiliary Air Force. The news about the Fleet staggered Europe. "You can imagine what it meant to us," a citizen of a Central European State once remarked to the author. "The actual cost of mobilization came to more than the whole of our annual Budget." Shortly after midnight Sir Horace Wilson arrived back in London, though it is probable that Mr. Chamberlain knew the substance of his report earlier in the day. The message he had to bring was that Hitler had left the door ajar. His troops were to enter the Sudeten-

land simply to preserve order; there was to be a plebiscite with a free vote with Hitler abiding by the result; finally he was prepared to join in the international guarantee of the new Czech State in whose welfare he for the first time displayed a benevolent interest. Mr. Chamberlain said in his speech to Parliament the next day that he believed Hitler meant what he said when he stated these things. The obscurities and differences had now in Mr. Chamberlain's view been narrowed down to a point "where really it was unreasonable that they could not be settled by negotiation."

During the night of September 27th-28th the Chancelleries were moving with increased momentum towards conference. Mr. Roosevelt addressed a second personal appeal to Hitler. Negotiations should be continued, "nothing stands in the way of widening their scope into a conference of all the nations directly interested in the present controversy." M. Bonnet had also sent instructions to his Ambassador in Berlin to make what was called "a new proposition" to the German Chancellor. He also suggested that the British Government should approach Mussolini "to join in a proposal for a conference." Finally a most significant reaction came from Berlin in the issue at 2 a.m. on the 28th by the official German news agency of a formal denial that general mobilization had been set by Hitler for that afternoon. It was to this accompaniment of political and diplomatic pressure that Mr. Chamberlain made his decisive contributions on that Wednesday morning when he dispatched his "final appeal" to Hitler and a personal message to Mussolini. In the appeal to Hitler it should be noted that in proposing a conference to arrange the transfer he gave Hitler the option of calling in France and Italy but made Czech representation a condition.

In the message to Mussolini it is possible to see how abundantly Mr. Chamberlain had been justified in his realistic approach to the Italian Dictator, himself the greatest realist of the age. "I trust your Excellency will inform the German Chancellor that you are willing to be represented and urge him to agree to my proposal which will keep all our peoples out of war." Mr. Chamberlain after Munich was the first to pay tribute to Mussolini's intervention, but the hero of the operation was he who had realized that the need might come to draw upon the Duce's goodwill, and who was also aware of Italy's embarrassment at her virtual isolation from the Czech dispute. Hitler, as next year with Poland, gave negligible scope to his Axis partner when he was after big things in Power politics.

We have followed Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28th up to the point where he announced the dispatch of the two messages. In response to Mussolini's request he was able to announce that Hitler had offered to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours. The House cheered. Then as the usually sober *Times* Diplomatic Correspondent put it, "Things began to happen." The speech had been going on for nearly eighty minutes. Every part of the Chamber was crammed, the galleries overflowing with Peers, Foreign Ambassadors and distinguished strangers. Just before the Premier's reference to Mussolini Lord Halifax received a message in the Peer's gallery and hurried out. Two sheets of paper were passed to Sir John Simon who after a short pause attracted Mr. Chamberlain's attention and handed them to him. For a minute Mr. Chamberlain stopped to read the contents. He had just been praising the Duce. "That is not all," he now went on, "I have something further to say to the House yet. I have now been informed by

Herr Hitler that he invites me to meet him at Munich to-morrow morning. He has also invited Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier. Signor Mussolini has accepted, and I have no doubt M. Daladier will also accept." A voice from the back benches, "Thank God for the Prime Minister!" "We are all patriots," Mr. Chamberlain went on, "but there can be no Hon. Member of this House who did not feel his heart leap that the crisis has been once more postponed to give us once more an opportunity to try what reason and goodwill and discussion will do to settle a problem which is already within sight of settlement. Mr. Speaker I cannot say any more. I am sure that the House will be ready to release me now to go and see what I can make of this last effort. Perhaps they may think it will be well, in view of this new development, that this Debate shall stand adjourned for a few days, when perhaps we may meet in happier circumstances." The scene of enthusiasm in the House when the Premier sat down has never been excelled and rarely equalled. Members on both sides stood in their places waving their order papers and cheering frantically for minutes on end. Many were to be seen with tears streaming down their cheeks. It did not accord with Anglo-Saxon traditions or with Dr. Arnold's ideas about the stiff upper lip, it went beyond convention, it was the voice of humanity, the longing for life and its abundance. There are no politics and parties when such issues are at stake.

Next morning at half-past eight the indefatigable Mr. Chamberlain left Heston for Munich. He was accompanied this time by Sir Horace Wilson, Sir William Malkin, Mr. Strang and Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. Reporters at the aerodrome were regaled with the motto of his childhood: "When I was a little boy I used to repeat 'if at first you don't succeed try, try, try

again.' That is what I am doing. When I come back, I hope I may be able to say as Hotspur says in *Henry IV* 'out of this nettle danger we pluck the flower safety.' " Munich was really a ceremony. Hitler by inviting the three statesmen, and the three statesmen by accepting, had agreed in advance that settlement should precede action. The fundamental point upon which Mr. Chamberlain had insisted at Berchtesgaden was vindicated at Munich. Hitler's wanton demands at Godesberg for European approval *ex post facto* had through Mr. Chamberlain's patience and technique been whittled down, and the original principle of peace by negotiation upheld. As for Munich itself the outstanding feature of the occasion was the wonderful welcome Mr. Chamberlain received from the German crowds. There is no doubt about its sincerity which went far beyond the bounds of official applause for a distinguished visitor; it was a real tribute for the work of the man whose objective was so closely in line with their deepest hopes. Hitler had gone to the old Austrian frontier to meet the Duce and his son-in-law Count Ciano. This arrangement enabled the two Dictators to have an hour's private discussion together.

When the Big Four had assembled at the Fuehrer's house Mr. Chamberlain drew their attention to the Czechs by suggesting that some of their representatives should be present to pass on to their Government the decisions reached at the conference. The Big Four worked quietly in one room, their staff of assistants and experts in another next to them codifying their ideas and decisions. Preliminary decisions were reached by three o'clock, by which time the Press was able to forecast that the balance was in favour of peace and that agreement was in sight. The second sitting lasted from 4.30 to 8.30 when there was an adjournment for dinner. The last

meeting resumed at 10 by which time there was definite information that an agreement was about to be signed. At 1 a.m. on the Friday morning amid the flashing of photographers' lamps the Big Four put their signatures to the documents and parted for the night.¹ According to one correspondent, while the Dictators looked in the best of spirits, Daladier seemed "sunk in the depths of despair" while Mr. Chamberlain managed still to maintain his "poker face."

Essentially, the area of the Sudetenland allotted to Hitler at Munich did not differ from what he was asking for at Godesberg. The substantial alteration was that the transfer was to be made in four stages by the successive occupations of four zones. Outstanding disputes were to be left to the discretion of a standing Committee of diplomats representing the Four Powers and Czecho-Slovakia. An Annex to the agreement informed the Czechs that Britain and France stood by their offer in the Anglo-French plan to guarantee the new Czech Frontier; the Germans and Italians were prepared to give a guarantee when once the claims of the Polish and Hungarian minorities had been settled. It must be confessed this Annex satisfied no one. The addition of Italy and Germany to the guarantors was a mere pretext for France and Britain not to act; and if the Democracies did mean to act, then strategically at least they were pledging themselves to defend the indefensible. Of far greater political interest was the declaration which Mr. Chamberlain, before leaving and after frank discussion, prevailed upon Hitler to sign with him "whereby we regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire

¹ By a curious lapse from the normal standard of German organization, the ink-well provided for the historic signature was found to be empty.

of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again," and whereby consultation was to be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries.¹

Undoubtedly in the first flush of peace Mr. Chamberlain hoped that this declaration would embody some more permanent aspiration than the bare facts of the Munich Agreement; and on his triumphal return speaking to the huge throng at Heston he stressed that the settlement of the Czecho-Slovakian problem was the prelude to a larger settlement in which all people might find peace. He then held up and read out to the crowd the declaration signed by Hitler and himself. On arrival in London fantastic scenes awaited him. He drove to Buckingham Palace where the King and Queen paid Mrs. Chamberlain and himself the unparalleled compliment of taking them on the floodlit balcony to greet the cheers of the vast assembly calling for them. In Downing Street and Whitehall, although it was a gusty, cold, damp evening was one seething mass of humanity roaring and singing to the point of hysteria. These men and women were neither gloating over political victories nor conscious of national defeats but revelling simply in the salvation and the prospect of peace for both of which they owed so much to Neville Chamberlain. "We want Neville Chamberlain! We want Neville Chamberlain!" they cried deliriously, and when he came to the window and held up his hand he commanded the most moving and complete silence from that incredible throng.

The thin yet buoyant voice rang clear into the night;

¹ After the Munich Agreement was signed, Mr. Chamberlain went to Hitler and extracted from him this pledge to follow the method of consultation. Hitler undoubtedly thought that the signature of the Agreement concluded the business of the day. He could not, however, plausibly refuse his signature to the declaration, which Mr. Chamberlain had written out and presented to him.

it was miraculous testimony to the man's apparently endless reserve of strength. "Peace with honour," he said—pandemonium. "Peace in our time"—"We thank you," they cried. "And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds"—blessed words. Hitler, Mussolini and Daladier, each was to receive the mightiest ovation of his career. In the words of a far-seeing American commentator they were "hailed as Messengers of God by populations suddenly delivered from the spectre of war."

FALSE DAWN

IT was difficult to think clearly or react quickly after Munich. It was easy to over-simplify; but emotionally the people were exhausted, and wanted rest. To conduct post-mortems was to court disfavour, but one or two outstanding facts were soon realized. Munich may have been a high price to pay for Peace, but in view of our resources in September 1938 it was incomparably cheaper than war under any conditions or anywhere in Europe. In discussing Munich, to enter into the details of the sufferings the Czechs had necessarily to undergo, is to lay a false emphasis. When Mr. Chamberlain went to Berchtesgaden he was face to face with a larger problem—how to reconcile Nazi Germany with the European order, and, if reconciliation was impossible, how to ensure that Nazi Germany did not challenge and overthrow that order. In weighing up these vast considerations great self discipline was required, and here Mr. Chamberlain's character stood him in good stead. It very soon became evident that Hitler did not relish reconciliation, but saw in the existing military deficiencies of the Democracies his supreme opportunity to overthrow the balance of Europe at one blow.

As Hitler's biographer, Konrad Heiden, has put it, at Munich, there were four men; one intended to go to war and three did not. By making Mussolini realize that British, French and Italian interest in an immediate Peace with Hitler in September 1938 were

in fact complementary, Chamberlain literally cheated Hitler of what would, to all the outward appearances, have been a certain victory. In September 1938, France had virtually no air force, and Britain was without air defences and with the merest shadow of an army. We are lucky to be alive to laugh at the air defence which we were beginning to install after Mr. Chamberlain returned from Godesberg. But at the back of Mr. Chamberlain's mind when he went to see Hitler was something more than mere survival to fight another day. That was not the fundamental objective of appeasement. On October 3rd, when the great House of Commons debate on the Munich Agreement began—the day on which Hitler made a personal entry into Zone III of the Sudetenland—Mr. Chamberlain declared that ever since he had assumed the Premiership his main purpose had been to work for the pacification of Europe “for the removal of those suspicions and those animosities which have so long poisoned the air. The path which leads to appeasement is long and bristles with obstacles. The question of Czecho-Slovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous. Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity.”

The respite was to be brief, the honeymoon short. In the first place Mr. Chamberlain was defending his action in reply to a passionate resignation statement from Mr. Duff Cooper, who, as First Lord of the Admiralty, had been the instrument of the decision to mobilize the fleet. He criticized Mr. Chamberlain's technique in handling Hitler all along the line. We had drifted towards war without direction; we had been non-committal when we should have been firm. He spoke of a “deep difference” between himself and the Premier. Mr. Chamberlain believed in addressing the Fuehrer in the language of sweet reasonableness

whereas Mr. Duff Cooper believed he was more open to the language of the mailed fist. At Berchtesgaden and Godesberg sweet reasonableness had only brought ultimata; it had won nothing "except terms which a cruel and revengeful enemy would have dictated to a beaten foe after a long war." Mr. Duff Cooper had tried to swallow Munich, but it "stuck in his throat." Mr. Chamberlain had signed his declaration with Hitler without any consultation with his colleagues or with the Dominions; this was not the way in which the foreign policy of the British Empire should be conducted.

In the debate which followed it soon became clear that in addition to the Opposition, which, with Peace assured, at once renewed Party warfare with cries of "shameful betrayal" and "abject surrender," there was to be a formidable anti-Munich bloc among the Conservatives. Mr. Churchill gave it as his view in one of his most impressive diatribes that we had sustained "a total and unmitigated defeat and France has suffered even more than we have." The difference between Godesberg and Munich was that instead of the victuals being snatched from the table, they were served to Herr Hitler course by course. Mr. Eden maintained that foreign affairs cannot indefinitely be continued on the basis of "stand and deliver." Successive surrenders brought only successive humiliations. Mr. Harold Nicolson, Mr. Amery, Lord Cranborne and the late Sir Sidney Herbert were among the rebels. Arguments for and against Munich often cut across party barriers. Suspicion of the whole idea of a Four-Power Pact was shared on both sides of the House as was concern over the new guarantee to the Czechs. In addition opinion was completely split as to whether Hitler was bluffing or no when he said he was prepared to risk a European war to attain his ends; also, the morality of the

preventive war was hotly disputed. These grave divisions of opinion implied that whatever Mr. Chamberlain had done he could not have commanded unanimous support for his action. On the whole the most damaging criticisms were those which like Mr. Churchill's took the long range view of the past and the strategic view of the future.

Sir John Simon put up a weighty defence of the Premier in what was widely regarded as the greatest speech of his career. Either Hitler meant certain war or was bluffing; but the one unpardonable fault in Foreign Diplomacy was a policy based on bluff. The risks in this case were altogether too great to admit of it. On the question of the Four Power Pact he pointed out that it was not intended to be exclusive; it was the necessary nucleus for wider agreements. The new factor brought about by Munich was that Hitler for the first time had made some concession. The dictators had been able to see for themselves that dread and detestation of war were not confined to the democratic peoples. Thirdly, Mr. Chamberlain's impact with the people of Germany meant that he and the Government were no longer abstractions distorted by Goebbels' propaganda. No amount of official falsehood could distort the facts that had met their eyes of a man pursuing a positive policy of peace. Winding up the debate, Mr. Chamberlain spoke again, elaborating his case. To speak of a betrayal of the Czechs was simply preposterous; our relations with the Czechs were complex and modified by French policy. It was not for us to put pressure on the French to repudiate their solemn engagements. We had saved Czecho-Slovakia from annihilation and given her the chance of a new life.

Two details of future policy which had aroused much speculation he dealt with firmly. There was to be no immediate general election and no compulsory

service in time of peace. There is no doubting that if he had gone to the country immediately, he would have secured an overwhelming majority comparable with the 1931 landslide: the women's vote, for instance, was his. But although there were obvious advantages in cashing-in on his victory before the vision of Peace faded, the decision not to do so was shrewd as well as generous. The victory would have been too complete; he needed the collaboration of Labour and the T.U.C. in a vast rearmament overhaul. To alienate them with a snap election was not the way to iron out differences between capital and labour prior to a great production drive. As it was he remained content with the huge vote in the House of Commons of 366 to 144. The Lords in their debate were equally decisive in their approval; Lord Halifax made an impressive defence of Munich which finally belied any rumours that he was a reluctant follower of the Prime Minister; and there were the same symptoms as in the Commons of opinions breaking through party barriers. Two of Mr. Chamberlain's most notable supporters were Viscount Samuel and Lord Allen of Hurtwood. That the conscription issue should have been raised at all was a sign of the squalls ahead. On the very day that *The Times* devoted its first leader in praise of Mr. Chamberlain and Peace at Munich, its second leader was taken up with consideration of the immediate need for some form of National Register.

On October 5th came the news that President Benes had resigned rather than submit to the decision of the Ambassadors' Committee that self-determination should be based upon a twenty-eight-year-old frontier map instead of upon current facts. French and British acquiescence in the use of this map meant that Hitler was likely to seize even more than he asked for at Munich. What Mr. Chamberlain had

insisted on at Munich, namely the terms of cession in advance of occupation, was now being ruthlessly overthrown. The new Czech Foreign Minister was hurrying to Berlin. "We have finished with the Western Powers," the Prague Press announced. Then on October 9th Hitler, in a speech at Saarbrücken, showed yet again the remorseless sequence of his ambitions, the morbid arrogance of his mentality. Not satisfied with the complete culmination of his territorial and racial demands, he apparently required that British opinion should be unanimous in his favour. He was very happy that peace had been saved, but we must be aware that at any moment a Chamberlain could be succeeded by an Eden, a Duff Cooper or a Churchill. If these men were to obtain power we would know clearly and beyond doubt that their aim would be to unleash immediately a world war against Germany. In view of the lies of Jewish warmongers and the power of the international Press which lived on lies and calumnies he was resolved to continue work on his Western fortifications. Then as a condition to appeasement all responsible statesmen should mind their own business. "This tutelage of foreign governesses is something Germany cannot and will not stand." The bogey of Palestine was raised; "but we leave that to those who think themselves chosen by the Lord God Almighty to solve these problems."

This deplorable speech was to be the first of a number in the same threatening and destructive vein, and though the exact motive for them in terms of Germany's self interest is somewhat difficult to detect they are partly to be explained in a deep personal dislike of Mr. Chamberlain which Hitler contracted after the Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich meetings. His temperamental outbursts, and his one big emotional parlour trick, which was to alternate

violence with calm in bewildering and irrational succession, left no mark on Mr. Chamberlain, whose cold precise manner, intense reserve and self discipline Hitler could neither appreciate nor understand. Mr. Chamberlain was not the sort of man who would be prepared to leave any inaccuracies in Hitler's monologues unchecked. Mr. Chamberlain, it may be said, held a similarly low opinion of Hitler's capacities.¹ Without attempting to press the comparison home, Hitler has closer affinities with the Celtic disposition, and the degree of the success of the interview Mr. Lloyd George had with him, together with Hitler's deep appreciation of Mr. Lloyd George's speeches, is in some ways the measure of his failure to make satisfactory personal contact with Mr. Chamberlain. In addition, Hitler was angrily aware that in well-informed diplomatic quarters all over the Continent Munich was regarded as a triumph for British diplomacy. If he could have castigated the Prime Minister personally, he would not have hesitated to do so, but Mr. Chamberlain's overwhelming popularity with the German people made such an onslaught extremely unsafe even for the Fuehrer; so Hitler compensated himself by attacking British leadership generally, and falling on Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden in particular. Incidentally, the effect of this venomous manoeuvre was considerably to raise the national prestige both of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden.

In addition to the Saarbrücken speech came disquieting reports that Hitler's price for complying with the three-to-one naval ratio in favour of Britain under the Anglo-German naval agreement, was a three-to-one preponderance in the air. The reports were never confirmed or denied officially, but were

¹ And of his reliability. Within a fortnight of his return from Munich Mr. Chamberlain privately expressed regret at having waved the "renunciation of war" to the crowds, and confessed his mistake in having made so much of it.

merely part of the ammunition manufactured by Berlin in a war of nerves and verbal aggression which from henceforth never abated. At the end of October General Von Epp, leader of the German Colonial League, was calling for Germany's former Colonial Empire "as a whole." Then followed the anti-Jewish pogroms throughout Germany—an advance in severity on anything previously known—the pretext for which was the murder in Paris of Vom Rath, a German diplomat, by a seventeen-year-old Jewish boy half crazed by the persecution suffered by himself and his family. Hitler's reprisals shocked the civilized world, and even sincere admirers of his in this country were repelled. Lord Baldwin, who previously had asserted that there was "nothing else on earth" Mr. Chamberlain could have done but go to Berchtesgaden, now over the wireless expressed the outraged feelings of the nation when he launched the Fund for Refugees that bears his name. For his pains he was grossly abused in the German Press. Then again Germany was following up the economic advantages of the post-Munich dispensation with almost indecent haste. Dr. Funk, the Reich Economic Minister, had by October 17th completed a flamboyant visit to Belgrade, Ankara and Sophia. In the Far East the Japanese intensified their campaign and attacked Canton. Hong-Kong was in peril.

The diplomatic response to all these alarming events was tentative, and in some respects, unreal. Reports came through in November that France and Germany were ready to sign a Pact similar in terms to Mr. Chamberlain's Declaration. Germany's motive for encouraging the understanding with France was as much to drive a wedge into Anglo-French understanding as to put the last nail in the coffin of the Franco-Soviet Pact. While this flirtation developed, Mr. Chamberlain took the earliest opportunity to

follow up his Munich contact with Mussolini, of whose handling of the negotiations on that occasion and of whose general capacity he had formed a very high opinion. Since Munich the Duce had withdrawn 10,000 of his legionaries from Spain, which was roughly half of his total effectives there. In addition, during the height of the crisis General Franco stood out firmly for Spain's neutrality. In these favourable circumstances Mr. Chamberlain decided that the time had come to liquidate the Spanish conflict as a source of European disturbance by implementing the Italian Agreement which had been languishing unratified since April. Having escaped the great catastrophe of war, surely Mr. Chamberlain asked, nobody can imagine that with that recollection fresh in their minds they are going to knock their heads together over Spain. It was Mussolini's action in using his influence with Hitler to give time for discussion, which made Munich possible. "By that act," Mr. Chamberlain declared to the House of Commons, "the peace of Europe was saved. Does anybody suppose that my request to Signor Mussolini to intervene would have met with a response from him or, indeed, that I could even have made such a request if our relations with Italy had remained what they were a year ago?"

But once again the perverse sequence of events made reconciliation with Italy difficult. Speaking at the Lord Mayor's Banquet on November 9th, Mr. Chamberlain described himself in a memorable phrase as a "go-getter" for Peace, but he was careful to point out that go-getting did not signify the abandonment of old friendship for new. Thus "our relations with France are too long standing, too intimate, too highly prized by both of us to allow such suspicions to be entertained for one moment." As a reinsurance of Anglo-French understanding and a mutual checking

up on Britain's approach to the Rome end and France's to the Berlin end of the Axis, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax with their wives paid a visit to Paris between November 23rd and 25th. On the whole very little headway was made; as one correspondent put it, the talks with the French ministers were "useful in a negative sense," but "provided no basis whatever for any constructive future policy." The course of the negotiations was interrupted by serious industrial strikes in France following M. Reynaud's drastic financial decrees with the result that M. Daladier's attention was distracted. Within a week of these abortive conversations Mussolini launched an amazing campaign for Mediterranean territory at the expense of France. His deputies, carefully stage directed, raised shouts for Tunis, Corsica and Nice. The President of the Chamber, Ciano's father, joined in the clamour while Mussolini himself, according to a reporter, "sat immobile, his teeth clenched and his arms crossed over his chest." In the Press campaign, what were probably the serious demands were set out, in particular Jibuti and a bigger share in the control over the Suez were stressed. The Fascist Government at once proceeded to disavow these claims, and three days later, on December 3rd, Mr. Chamberlain accepting the disavowal, formally announced that he would be going to Rome in January for a talk with Mussolini.

The French, to say the least of it, were not pleased. On December 6th Ribbentrop was smuggled into Paris, and a brief statement of goodwill drafted and signed. In addition to the reasons suggested above the Germans hoped by working on a liaison with France, finally to oust Britain from the Balkans. With the French acquiescent in the new order, Britain, they felt, had no further direct interest. Had not Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons at the

conclusion of the Funk mission publicly testified to the legitimate dominance of Germany in Central and South-eastern Europe? For the French the situation was not so satisfactory. The empty streets when Ribbentrop arrived in Paris, symbolized the amount of enthusiasm with which the French public welcomed an Entente with the Nazis; and then on December 12th, a reply by Mr. Chamberlain to questions in Parliament, to the effect that no treaty or pact with France contained any specific requirement that Great Britain should lend military assistance to her should Italy embark in warlike operations against her or her possessions, almost created a panic in the Quai d'Orsay. True it was that the very next night in a speech of major importance to the Foreign Press Association Mr. Chamberlain put the matter right by observing with emphasis that our relations with France passed beyond mere legal obligations, since they were founded on identity of interest; but the very warmth of the applause with which this point was greeted by his influential and cosmopolitan audience, showed how bad the psychological lapse of his earlier statement had been, and how full of traps the path of appeasement was. The Foreign Press Association dinner was notable for the last minute absence of the German guests. They stayed away on instructions from Berlin when it was learnt that Mr. Chamberlain was to make a severe reference to the persecution of the Jews and the slanders on Lord Baldwin. The policy of appeasement could not be expected to survive for long when the spirit of appeasement was so feeble.

In replying to a vote of censure on the Government's Foreign Policy on December 19th, Mr. Chamberlain held out the hand of genuine friendship to the Germans yet again. The treatment of the Germans in the post-War period had been neither



OFF DUTY

Neville Chamberlain fishing in Aberdeenshire.

generous nor wise. "With the passage of time has come to us a recognition of their great qualities, and a strong desire to see them co-operating in the restoration of European civilization. There is no spirit of vindictiveness here. There is no desire to hamper their development or cramp their tremendous vitality as a nation." Never has German statesmanship had addressed to it a more eloquent, sincere, or profound plea for co-operation from a British Prime Minister. But it was not enough for the British Government alone to desire to co-operate. "I am still waiting for a sign from those who speak for the German people that they share this desire." The sign did not come, and as an American commentator aptly put it when describing this gloomy twilight phase in European diplomacy: "Mr. Chamberlain must feel like saying with the Psalmist, 'I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof they make them ready to battle.'"

Readiness for battle: such was the immediate lesson the Governments of the nations drew from their reprieve at Munich. On all sides there was clamour that Britain must never again face a European crisis of such magnitude in such a condition of unpreparedness. Mr. Chamberlain had the clearest mandate after Munich to amplify and hasten our Defence Plans. Government supporters—and even Opposition spokesmen—who were clamouring for a Ministry of Supply, a National Register, and an ambitious Air Defence programme, were voicing the urgent demands of the people, but for three precious months at least, the Prime Minister kept his own counsel. Great headway was being made; but he was at pains not to dramatize it. He clearly conceived it necessary to subordinate emphasis on rearmament to the requirements of his diplomacy, nor was he as yet persuaded that there should be any drastic control over the com-

paratively unrestricted practices of industry and commerce. Many felt at the time that he was delaying to the point of danger, until once again we should be hustled into desperate diplomatic ventures with our military obligations uncertain and our armaments incomplete. In fact, he was endeavouring to steer a middle course; over-emphasis would have tempted the Nazis to strike before we were ready, and under-emphasis would diminish the confidence of people and Allies. On the whole he tended to the latter course, which made his position apparently vulnerable to the criticism of the Churchill group.

There was not only dissatisfaction in the country; it was to be detected also amongst loyal back-bench supporters and even in the Government itself, when Mr. Hudson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, and a prominent Junior Minister, led a revolt of his colleagues specifically against Mr. Hore-Belisha's regime at the War Office. The blow was misdirected; it would have been far more effective if it had been aimed at Lord Stanhope, whose appointment as First Lord after Mr. Duff Cooper's resignation was not to be justified either in terms of public policy or private loyalty to a supporter. Mr. Chamberlain made the mistake of committing the British Navy, during a most critical phase in its history, to the care of a man who was simply not big enough for the job. The Hudson episode died away, but Lord Stanhope stayed on, a constant reminder to the public of Mr. Churchill's unemployment. Of course there were difficulties; the Labour movement whose support was essential, could not quickly be won over to the principle of conscription in peace time. Passive air defence under Sir John Anderson, the new Lord Privy Seal, was at last being unravelled,¹ but a great

¹ Towards the end of October 1938 considerable alarm had been caused by the statement of a prominent A.R.P. official who had asserted: "We are not prepared; we have hardly begun to prepare; we do not know how all the failures that occurred during the crisis can be avoided next time."

deal of administrative confusion and misunderstanding had to be cleared away. Sir John is a first-rate Civil Servant, but his public personality was not such as to invest Air Defence with the vigour and urgency of a crusade. It was a long time before the public reacted to the urgency of this work and then only indirectly through the momentum of the larger crisis.

When at last towards the end of February a White Paper on Defence was published, it was sufficiently comprehensive and ambitious to meet the requirements of the most captious critics; many of its details were scheduled for the near future, and it was clear that its staggering provisions had been consistently undersold by Mr. Chamberlain and his Ministers. Finally, in February, Lord Chatfield was asked to join the Cabinet as Minister for Co-ordination of Defence. The full effect of the Baldwinian time lag in our rearmament upon our diplomatic drive for peace, must be left for future historians to assess; but even between October 1938 and February 1939 too many rumours were allowed to go unchecked that all was not well.

Before the end of 1938 Mr. Chamberlain was able to announce the successful conclusion of the Anglo-American trade negotiations, which quite apart from the increased volume of goods exchanged between the two great Democracies, symbolized the triumph of straightforward commercial negotiation based upon common principles of action in international affairs. In addition the Cabinet finally decided against Partition originally recommended by the Peel Commission for Palestine, and a new phase of direct negotiation with the Arabs and Jews was inaugurated. Here the policy of delay was abundantly justified in view of the delicate situation in the Near East as a whole, and the need for Britain to maintain influence by strength admittedly, but, during the coming

months, without friction. After Mr. Malcolm MacDonald's triumph with the Eire Government, Mr. Chamberlain wisely transferred him to the Colonial Office to tackle Palestine. This shrewd and timely appointment undoubtedly helped to prevent the Palestine crisis from boiling over in the coming anxious months. For Mr. Chamberlain needed all his time and energy to cope with the unabating crisis in Europe. Towards the end of December Mussolini followed up the "Corsica, Tunis, Nice" campaign with an official note to Paris denouncing the Mussolini-Laval Agreement of 1935. The French replied that they must still regard it as valid. Both assertions considerably increased the tension between the two Governments, and seemed to threaten the prospects of success for Mr. Chamberlain's mission to Rome.

However, this visit, to the accompaniment of considerable pomp and circumstance, passed off without creating any major disturbance on the diplomatic front. Mr. Chamberlain, who was accompanied by Lord Halifax, was careful to pause on the way at Paris, and was there able to reassure Daladier and Bonnet once more, that the objectives were purely exploratory. The chief outward importance of the visit was the spontaneous enthusiasm the presence of the British Ministers in their plain clothes, surrounded as they were by a galaxy of uniformed officials, aroused among the Italian people. Mr. Chamberlain's umbrella which had been immortalized in Strube's cartoon at the time of the flight to Berchtesgaden served him well in Europe. To the Continental mind it is a far more impressive symbol of our peaceful ways than either Mr. Baldwin's pigs or his pipe. No doubt the warmth of Mr. Chamberlain's welcome in Rome confirmed him in his view that the Dictators had in their peoples a peace potential assisting him in his search for appeasement. In the course of a com-

prehensive exchange of views with the Duce—a welcome relief from Hitler in his tone and technique and intellectual equipment—Mr. Chamberlain was enabled to form a first-hand judgment as to how far Italy would press her claims against France—the justice of which in respect of Jibuti and Suez it was difficult to deny. He also received some assurance of a safe conclusion to the Spanish conflict as far as our Mediterranean interests were concerned. Actually a fortnight later Barcelona fell, and with it the last effective resistance of the Republic. The policy of delay was to receive further vindication, and the Rome visit at a critical moment did much to ensure that there should be no further tension between Italy and Britain over the integrity of Spain. Mr. Chamberlain made it clear that he was not prepared to mediate between Paris and Rome, but that a direct threat to France would “not leave Britain unmoved”; lastly, Mr. Chamberlain stressed the supreme importance to Britain of Italy standing by her guarantee of support for the Mediterranean *status quo*; and if Mussolini had any lingering doubts upon the strategic emphasis we lay on the Mediterranean, they were finally set at rest during this Rome visit.

The full significance of the talks it is as yet impossible to assess, but historians with more evidence at their disposal may well decide that Mr. Chamberlain at Rome in January 1939, laid the foundations of benevolent Italian neutrality nine months later. Suffice it to say that his firmness combined with his sympathy for the Italian case, must have weakened the Duce's resolve to undertake hazardous adventures against France, while reassuring him that if the Allies found themselves in war there would be no second Versailles for Italy. During the visit Mr. Chamberlain had an audience of Pius XI, and it was noted that he was visibly affected by the dying Pope's courage,

kindliness and expressions of profound goodwill for Britain. While at the Vatican, the British visitors made valuable contact, and had a very full and frank talk with Cardinal Pacelli, who, as Papal Secretary of State, was officially in charge of Papal Foreign Policy, and who a few months later was to ascend the throne of St. Peter as Pius XII. Not for the first time had Mr. Chamberlain accomplished more than he could expect to be given credit for publicly. There were limits to the adventures which Italy would take on behalf of the Axis; and these were more clearly defined after Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Rome than before it.

In the meanwhile the world was set another riddle by the Fuehrer. On January 28th he relieved Dr. Schacht of his position as President of the Reichsbank—a step which financial and political experts alike agreed was the deliberate breaking of his last link with moderate, orthodox and sane counsels. It portended inflation on the one hand, political aggression on the other. But ten days later in his annual address to the Reichstag, he spoke in what were for him dulcet tones and prophesied a long period of peace. Italian claims were fully underwritten as if to show Mr. Chamberlain that when it came to giving effective support to the Duce Hitler was the one man to do it. Mr. Chamberlain, however, was not to be drawn, and observed in Parliament the next day, that the speech gave him the impression that it was not the speech of a man who was preparing to throw Europe into another crisis. It was during the course of this statement, which was primarily a report of the Mussolini conversations, that Mr. Chamberlain gave it as his opinion that the biggest barrier between France and Italy was the Spanish question; until that was removed no negotiations would be productive. At last, on February 27th, in face of bitter Opposition

criticism, and simultaneously with M. Daladier, he announced in the House of Commons that Britain and France unconditionally recognized General Franco as ruler of Spain.

With the taking of this decision there was a brief *détente*. The arrival of delegates for a big Conference on Palestine, together with speeches on the Defence White Paper occupied much of Mr. Chamberlain's time. At last he was able to give Parliament and the People the assurances they wanted. £580,000,000 was to be the bill for arms over the year 1939-40: he rung back the curtain on the air and sea armadas, guns, ammunition and air-raid defences, which this astronomical sum was to buy, and the nation was now satisfied that the job was well in hand. March opened in an atmosphere of great expectations. Government spokesmen began to develop what almost amounted to a campaign of optimism. On March 10th we find Sir Samuel Hoare who a short while ago had ridiculed his opponents as jitterbugs indulging saturnine fancies and putting forward a five-year plan. He described how three Dictators and two Prime Ministers "working together in Europe and blessed in their efforts by the President of the United States of America, might make themselves eternal benefactors of the human race. Our Prime Minister has shown his determination to work heart and soul to such an end. I cannot believe that the other leaders of Europe will not join him in the high endeavour upon which he is engaged."

The prophecy was infelicitous; for on this very day—March 10th—the Czech Government, learning that Slovak separatists, with Hitler's connivance, were plotting to overthrow what remained of the Republic, dismissed the Slovak Premier, Mgr. Tiso, and other ministers. By the 13th Tiso was received by Hitler, and on the next day while the Czech President, Dr.

Hacha, and his Foreign Minister were actually on their way to Berlin, German troops crossed the frontiers and began occupying Czech towns. Thus before the British public had time even to acquaint itself with the bare facts of an obscure dispute, Hitler, by the invasion, had crossed his Rubicon, broken faith with the most patient and peace-loving negotiator Great Britain had ever produced, and flagrantly belied the two basic doctrines of National Socialism—the cults of blood and race. Secretly, silently, without remorse or consultation Adolf Hitler destroyed the policy of Appeasement. In the early hours of March 15th after an all-night conference with Goering, the hapless President Hacha signed an agreement placing his country “trustingly in the hands of the leader of the German Reich.” Later on that day, Hitler—the conqueror of the bloodless wars—was in Prague, and took up his residence in the historical Hradcany Castle of the Bohemian Kings.

The forces released by Hitler's action are only just beginning to operate, and it is not possible to do more than to point out their impact on Mr. Chamberlain and his policy in the light of his public statements. For Hitler the Road to Prague was the Road to War; everything else follows in logical sequence from this initial decision of March 14th. This is fundamental to a consideration of the last months of peace. Hitler himself has done all he can to obscure the issue by separating his dispute with Poland and the British guarantee to the Poles, from his seizure of Czechoslovakia. Yet the momentous conversion of Mr. Chamberlain from the apostle of appeasement to the bold advocate of the Peace Front, was based upon his final recognition that the second crisis was the direct outcome of the first. Just how shattering the blow must have been to the Prime Minister it is not difficult to imagine. In his narrative of events to the

House of Commons on March 15th, he made the last despairing effort. "The attempt to preserve a state," he declared, "containing Czechs, Slovaks as well as minorities and other nationalities, was liable to the same possibilities of change as was the constitution which was drafted when the state was originally framed under the Treaty of Versailles. And it has not survived. That may or may not have been inevitable, and I have so often heard charges of breach of faith bandied about which did not seem to me to be founded upon sufficient premises, that I do not associate myself to-day with any charges of that character." Apart from the assertion that the move was not in accord with the spirit of Munich and that it was a shock to confidence, Mr. Chamberlain was not drawn into uttering at once the condemnation which the House and the nation seemed to demand of him. Industrial negotiations between the Federation of British Industries and its German counterpart, had been making considerable progress. Mr. Stanley, President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Hudson were just about to leave for Berlin; their visit was "postponed," and the negotiations as a whole, without being immediately abandoned, were put into cold storage. Their success to date may have tempted Mr. Chamberlain to be cautious. Be that as it may, between the 15th and 17th this discontent within the Conservative Party was so formidable that a "strong" speech became inevitable. The language of appeasement had been heard for the last time.

The temper of the debate was such that Mr. Eden commanded a larger measure of support than at any time since his resignation. He had never pressed home his disagreement with the Premier. Beyond a visit to the United States, and a dull, disappointing address to a large mass meeting at the Queen's Hall, Mr. Eden had criticized gently and from a distance.

Now when he asked that present methods in Europe should not be allowed to continue unchecked, and when he pleaded for an all-party Government to let the world know that "this, the greatest Democracy in Europe, was uniting to make an effort without parallel in history," he was formidable and not wholly to be denied. Mr. Churchill had throughout been pursuing a more actively hostile policy and on the 14th of March, while the German troops were on the move, he denounced Mr. Chamberlain's policy in the strongest terms. By giving away Czech interests we had given away Britain's interests and the interests of truth and justice. The destruction of Czecho-Slovakia had altered the whole balance of Power in Europe.

On the 16th Hitler placed Bohemia and Moravia by decree, under "the protection of the Reich," and in doing so, put forward the anarchic doctrine of self-preservation in place of the self-determination he had so vehemently defended to Mr. Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden. Then on the next day, following the news that Mr. Roosevelt had refused to recognize the annexation and would ask Congress to revise the Neutrality Act, Mr. Chamberlain went back to Birmingham and there put the great question before his own people and to the world at large—"Is this the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new?" He did not leave his audience in doubt about the answer. Already there were indications that the process—that is, the domination of the world by force—"has begun, and it is obvious that it is likely now to be speeded." "Acts of violence and injustice," he concluded, "bring with them sooner or later their own reward. Every one of these incursions raises up fresh dangers for Germany, and I venture to prophesy that in the end she will bitterly regret what she has done." Within a fortnight Mr. Chamberlain had

implemented this attitude with the historic guarantee to Poland. It is a *volte-face* in British Foreign Policy without precedent in the nation's history. Admittedly Mr. Chamberlain's speech was the firmest and most severe in tone he had ever delivered, but few would have dared forecast that his conversion would have driven him in such apparent precipitation to offer Poland a unilateral and unqualified guarantee. Within the course of the fortnight he decided to throw overboard all the provisos and the saving clauses that had made the Czech negotiations such a complex commentary on the relative values of the pledged word. In the case of Poland it was simply that "in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power."

A bare recital of the facts between March 15th and 31st gives a compelling impression of how the crisis increased in intensity and range. The day after Mr. Chamberlain's speech, which perhaps had the best Press of any since he had become Prime Minister, there were three highly significant developments. The United States Government put a penalty tariff of 25 per cent on exports from all areas controlled by Germany. The British and French Governments presented notes protesting and refusing to recognize the annexation. In London alarming information came from Bucharest to the effect that the German Government was putting tremendous pressure on Roumania to make sweeping economic concessions to the Reich. Sir Nevile Henderson had already been recalled, and Lord Halifax at once began consultations with the French, American and Soviet Ambassadors. Thirdly, the Russian Government proposed

an immediate Six-Power Conference with Britain, France, Poland, Roumania and Turkey. While proposals and counter-proposals were made, Hitler acted yet again. On March 21st he delivered an ultimatum to Lithuania demanding the return of Memel to the Reich, and two days later, arriving by the battleship *Deutschland*, made a triumphal entry into that city. At the same time his trade agreement with Roumania was signed. The immediate impression was that Bucharest had handed over her economic sovereignty to Germany, but further examination suggested that King Carol and his Government had just managed to keep their heads above water. All the same on March 27th M. Gafencu, the Foreign Minister, asserted that "the fate of our country is at stake," and the view taken of Roumania's position and prospects in Whitehall was not a reassuring one. Mussolini had just made a sinister reference to Italian interests in the Adriatic in addition to upholding his claims against France, and it was felt in well-informed quarters that Hitler must be about to make another *putsch* somewhere soon. The absorption of Prague and Memel meant within a mere week great increase in German power on Poland's northern and southern frontiers. When these coups were at once followed by German troop movements on a considerable scale, and the sudden, though all too familiar Press onslaughts, an immediate invasion of Poland was generally expected.

With Lithuania neutral and Slovakia occupied, with talk of "intolerable terror" in the Polish Corridor, and with vast German armies in strategic positions, the British Cabinet, after three momentous emergency meetings, decided that the guarantee to Poland had by now become a primary British interest. In effect, the Cabinet had decided that Hitler's next victim, whatever country it might be, in whatever

part of the world, would have our military assistance. There was enough evidence now available to show that the expansion Hitler envisaged was the form of domination this country has always resisted from the days of Philip II of Spain to those of Wilhelm II of Germany. When the great issue was debated on the 3rd of April, there was an impressive closing of the ranks. The assurances of Munich said Mr. Chamberlain had now been thrown to the winds, and new reasons given for the new aggression, but "it is inevitable that they should raise doubts as to whether further reasons might not presently be found for further expansion. . . . This country has been united from end to end by the conviction that we must now make our position clear and unmistakable whatever may be the result." People and Parliament alike, approved this as a just estimate of the national will. It was the gravest warning that Hitler had ever received.

PEACE FRONT

IN tracing the record of Mr. Chamberlain in the last tragic phase of the peace that was no peace it is not possible within the scope of this book to make more than passing reference to the part played by him in the nation's war preparation. It is as yet too early to judge just how effective or otherwise this side of his leadership has been. Omissions or mistakes made before the actual outbreak of hostilities may well be in process of rapid and effective readjustment under the auspices of the Prime Minister and his War Cabinet. Alternatively, what seemed belated decisions, almost a certain reluctance to act in advance of events, may well prove to have been wisdom and an astute husbanding of resources. When war is the argument, it is the whole-hoggers who make the greatest appeal; the search for compromise is discounted, and so, as in the cases of the powers given to the Ministry of Supply in peace time and of Economic Warfare subsequently, and of the Ministers—Mr. Burgin and Mr. Cross—appointed to carry out these two supreme responsibilities, some have felt that Mr. Chamberlain has not been fully aware of the immense strategic implications of these two departments. On the other hand it can be urged on the Prime Minister's behalf that the appointment of Lord Chatfield as Minister for Co-ordination of Defence was a timely and imaginative decision. Originally the Service and Supply Departments were working to a general plan to achieve peak production and preparation in 1941-2.

The Cabinet in its decision to guarantee Poland had, it would seem, data showing a rate of progress well in advance of schedule. Historians may well have praise to bestow on Mr. Chamberlain for our armament position in September 1939, the full strength of which, owing to the inevitable lack of detailed evidence available to the public cannot as yet be set out. It is sufficient to say that our armament deficiencies in September 1938 were not primarily his responsibility and that our readiness in September 1939 was.

We have noted that there was almost unanimous approval in Parliament for the Polish guarantee. The Opposition looked on it as symbolizing a return to Collective Security, and Mr. Chamberlain satisfied any doubts they may have had in that direction by the description of it as "a cover note issued in advance of the complete insurance policy." Only one powerful voice was raised to express the deepest misgiving at the whole enterprise. Mr. Lloyd George, leaning heavily on his war experience, regarded the Polish guarantee as a panic measure, a decision taken without proper thought in response to alarmist rumours, and one impossible of military fulfilment—unless we had in advance the certain knowledge that it was to be backed by full Russian support. Without this proviso—and apparently we were without it—he condemned the guarantee as an act of madness. During the next three weary months this plea was to be reinforced as negotiations with the Soviet Government dragged on without any appreciable progress being made, but before considering these abortive Moscow talks it should be noted that Mr. Lloyd George's emphasis on the purely military aspect of our guarantee showed that he had failed to detect the fundamental difference between German diplomacy in 1914 and in 1939.

The Nazi "revolution" meant the strict subordination of military strategy to diplomatic manœuvre. Hitler had laid it down in *Mein Kampf* that military plans of General Staffs were to be made and scrapped, remade and scrapped again to meet a bewildering number of temporary and often contradictory diplomatic requirements. In some respects the Polish guarantee was the British response to this unprecedented technique which had enabled Germany to incorporate the Saar, the Rhineland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and to confine the use of her soldiers for route marches culminating in victory parades at the various capitals already conquered by the diplomatic offensive. In considering therefore the wisdom or otherwise of the Polish guarantee in the light of subsequent events, it is important to recognize that it was an improvisation. There is no precedent for Hitler in the domain either of European diplomacy or of modern war.

Mr. Chamberlain, however, met with masterly resource the demands of the diplomatic situation as it developed in menace and complexity during the Spring and Summer of 1939. He had no sooner left for the North to enjoy a peaceful Easter than the startling, although not wholly unexpected, news came through of the invasion of Albania by Italian troops, following King Zog's refusal to submit to terms which he regarded as being incompatible with the national independence of his country. The day chosen by Mussolini for this brutal action against a State with which he was in defensive alliance was Good Friday. At one stroke therefore, he succeeded in outraging the Christian and Islamic worlds. Unless Albania was to be the base for further Italian expansion, it was difficult to see his motives for risking so much to attain so little; after all, Albania had been little more than an Italian protectorate ever since Zog had seized

the throne. There was some criticism of Mr. Chamberlain that he did not break off his holiday at once and summon Parliament. Alarming reports were coming in from Athens and Belgrade.

When on April 13th the extraordinary Session was called Mr. Chamberlain soon showed that our response to totalitarian aggression from whatever quarter was neither wavering nor ambiguous. The Prime Minister proceeded to announce in exactly the same words as applied to Poland that Great Britain was guaranteeing both Greece and Roumania. The guarantee to Greece had been widely forecast in the Lobbies of Parliament and in the world's Press, but the inclusion of Roumania as well came as a great surprise. Information received in Paris from Bucharest had been to some extent responsible for the Cabinet's decision, but with gratifying promptitude Mr. Chamberlain had exploited the Albanian coup, in which Berlin had acquiesced and perhaps connived, further to protect Europe against German aggression and against the reversal of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. Roumanian oil-fields and Greek islands alike were to be made dangerous places for the exercise of the blackmail and banditry which was threatening to crush the last breath of freedom and independence out of small European states.

A good instance of Britain's strength of purpose was given by Mr. Chamberlain when he described how the Greeks had informed London of their anxiety for the future security of Corfu. The Italians countered this by stressing their anxiety at reports in the British Press that Britain intended to occupy the island as a reply to the Italian invasion of Albania. The Italian Chargé d'Affaires told Lord Halifax that such a move on Britain's part would create "most dangerous reactions." "Lord Halifax," the Prime Minister observes, "told him that he could dismiss

from his mind that the British Government had any intention of occupying Corfu; but His Majesty's Government would take a very grave view if anyone else occupied it." Nevertheless, Mr. Chamberlain, though deeply disappointed, refused to agree with those who wanted to denounce the Anglo-Italian Agreement at once. "Nobody with any sense of responsibility can in these days lightly do anything which would lead to an increase of international tension." He believed there was a widespread desire, all the greater because of prevailing uneasiness, to see the fulfilment of the remaining provision of the Agreement, "and naturally, in view of recent events, it is to the Italian Government that I look for practical evidence that they share that desire." From that moment onwards Italian grievances and agitations were secondary factors in the general disturbance.

Politics is very largely the art of timing; there could hardly be a better example of that than Mr. Chamberlain's reactions to the Albanian aggression, which coincided with and intensified a series of diplomatic contacts between Europe's statesmen. British conversations with Poland, Turkey and the Soviet, were actively pressed forward. The Polish guarantee had already become reciprocal. Turkey was in due course to join the new guarantee system, though there was delay while outstanding and traditional differences between Turkey and France over the Sanjak of Alexandretta were ironed out. But the greatest significance attached to the progress of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. It will be recalled that immediately following the invasion of Prague the Russians put up a proposal for a Six-Power Conference—conferences were the Kremlin's automatic prescription for all European ills. On that occasion it was generally felt by the British Government that the procedure suggested was altogether too cumbrous and

involved too many divergent interests to meet an immediate emergency. Accordingly Mr. Chamberlain proposed as an interim measure—actually on the day that Hitler presented Lithuania with the ultimatum for Memel—a declaration to be signed by Britain, France, Russia and Poland, pledging the signatories to consult in the event of aggression. The Soviet rather grudgingly accepted this alternative, but the trouble at once began with the Powers who were to be the beneficiaries under this guarantee. The Poles and Roumanians from the outset raised difficulties, and the British proposals were soon rendered abortive.

By the middle of April the negotiations had already split off into two, and the British Government was straining every nerve to reconcile Poland and Roumania to being defended by Soviet troops and airmen. This was the fundamental problem throughout all the wearisome and nerve-racking ups and downs of Anglo-Soviet diplomacy; not until the eve of war, until von Ribbentrop was actually leaving Berlin on his first journey to Moscow, did Poland withdraw objections to physical assistance from Russia. It was only natural that the Poland of Pilsudski, owing its existence as a Power to the inordinate ambitions and ultimate overthrow of the Bolsheviki, should, in certain circumstances, conceive that the accommodation with Hitler, if not actually aggression by him, was a preferable path to "protection" from Stalin. The Poles did not relish the thought that the British guarantee was in effect nothing more than an invasion by Voroshilov's hordes and Mr. Chamberlain had to reassure the Poles that such was not our intention. This in its turn increased Soviet disinclination to co-operate.

The Soviet aim was far reaching, but comparatively simple to follow; if Poland was a vital interest to Britain, Russia was prepared to assist in its defence

providing Britain equally pledged herself to a defence and furtherance of Russia's "vital interests" in the Baltic. Since the outbreak of war we have seen that Soviet aims unchecked would turn the Baltic into a Red sea and gravely threaten the historic neutrality of Scandinavia, far more completely neutral in tradition and practice than ever Poland has aspired to be: how would it at any time have been possible for Mr. Chamberlain to compromise our relationships with the Scandinavian democracies in order to buy Russian aid for Poland? A satisfactory arrangement could only have been effected within the framework of the League Covenant or by a guarantee to all Europe's neutrals irrespective of the immediate vital interests either of Great Britain or Soviet Russia. It was often suggested that Mr. Chamberlain was obstructing the Moscow talks for ideological motives, but if ideology played any part in them—although so far as can be ascertained they were strictly Power Politics negotiated in the unedifying terms of an oriental bazaar—then Stalin has a lot to answer for. As early as March 10th, in perhaps the most momentous of his comparatively rare speeches,¹ Stalin told a congress of the Communist Party in no uncertain terms, that he suspected the capitalist Democracies of the most nefarious aims. It is to be regretted that only the most meagre versions of this speech appeared in the British Press. Yet it undoubtedly provides the key to the mystery of Anglo-Soviet relations in 1939. Mr. Chamberlain, of course, knew all about it, but the British public did not. Mr. Chamberlain was accordingly subjected to criticism that might have been avoided if the contents of the Stalin speech had been widely known at the time.

According to Stalin non-intervention was a mere

¹ By this time Germany and Russia were already in contact. Ribbentrop had met in February the Russian Ambassador in Berlin at the house of another Ambassador, and in this conversation the Pact had its genesis.

connivance at aggression. Rumours, well founded as it happened, appearing in the Press of the three great capitalist and imperialist democracies, Britain, France and the U.S.A., that Germany had designs on the Ukraine were in Stalin's words, a "suspicious hullabaloo," the object of which was "to incense the Soviet Union against Germany, to poison the atmosphere and to provoke a conflict with Germany without any visible grounds." A little later he asserts, "one might think that the districts of Czecho-Slovakia were yielded to Germany as the price of an undertaking to launch war on the Soviet Union, but that now the Germans are refusing to meet their bills and are sending them to Hades." It is in such a context as this that the four basic principles of Soviet Foreign policy as laid down by Stalin should be read. Three of the principles consist of the encouragement of business relations with all countries, the strengthening of Soviet military forces and unity with the workers of the world and are innocuous enough; but the fourth describes the task of the Party to "be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them."

Thus, five weeks before the Anglo-Soviet talks opened officially in Moscow, during which time Polish objections to Russian aid steadily hardened, Stalin showed conclusively that his suspicions of British aims were so deep rooted as to make any form of agreement with him, quite apart from what Warsaw and Bucharest might require, extremely difficult to reach except by hard, lengthy and undisturbed discussion. Of course, the ever-increasing tension between Germany and Poland forced Britain and Russia alike to press their own immediate self-interest with all the more determination. For Mr. Chamberlain too, it must have been extremely difficult to place

any reliance on Soviet good faith. He first suggested that the Soviet should make a similar guarantee to Poland and Roumania as Britain had done. The Russians at once replied, putting up a complex programme based upon a triple defensive alliance with Britain and France, a military convention and the guarantee of all states from the Black Sea to the Baltic. Then on May 3rd came the sensational news—sensational even for the Kremlin—that Litvinov had been dismissed and was no longer Foreign Commissar. To Russians the move meant little—foreign affairs are far distant to them, and do not impinge on their consciousness—but in Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay it caused the utmost concern. Litvinov was known to world opinion as the architect of Russia's adherence to the League, as the resolute advocate of a strong anti-Nazi and pro-Democratic policy. On the whole it is believed that Litvinov's removal was primarily due to internal causes; he had nothing like the power in the Politbureau as he had at Geneva and the capitals of Europe, but the effect abroad of Stalin's decision at that particular moment, whether calculated or not, was most unfortunate. Litvinov had symbolized good relations with Britain and his departure implied a reversal of that policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that when two days later a suggestion was made to Mr. Chamberlain that he should pay a visit to Moscow, he was moved to reply: "Perhaps the Hon. Member would suggest with whom I am to make personal contact because personalities change rather rapidly."

On May 9th the British Government made one more effort to limit the scope of the Peace Front to unilateral guarantees, and on May 10th Mr. Chamberlain made it clear that it was no part of the Government's intention that the Soviet Government should commit themselves to intervene irrespective of

whether Great Britain and France had already, in discharge of their obligations, done so. "If the Soviet wanted to be so bound the British Government of course had no objection, but they were putting forward proposals at once more comprehensive and more rigid, which, whatever other advantages it might present, must in the view of His Majesty's Government inevitably raise the very difficulties which their own proposals had been designed to avoid." Upon the rigidity of Moscow's diplomatic method the negotiations foundered. Stalin was adamant and in his reply merely repeated his original proposals in rather simpler form. On May 19th Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons remarked somewhat cryptically in explaining the delay: "I cannot help feeling that there is a sort of veil, a sort of wall between the two Governments which it is extremely difficult to penetrate."¹ Mr. Chamberlain by instinct belonged to those who realized that Soviet aims were expansionist and aggressive, i.e. more like those of her future partner, Nazi Germany, than those of Britain and France who were trying to restrain that country's activities. He parried questions by saying: "I must walk warily and I do not want to say anything which will make things more difficult than they are already. What I have said was that we are not concerned merely with the Russian Government. We have other Governments to consider." One member suggested "Italy," but the Prime Minister would not be drawn. It is much more likely that the reference to "other Governments" applied to the Baltic States. Various diplomatic exchanges with them soon revealed that they were not prepared to abandon one iota of their absolute neutrality.

¹ The actual context for this remark was the Kremlin's sudden and last-minute decision not to send the Soviet Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Potomkin, to a meeting of the League of Nations where he could have met Lord Halifax.

By the end of May, however, Mr. Chamberlain consented to the Soviet formula of a Triple Pact and Military Convention, but asked that the guarantees should be confined to Poland and Roumania, and that the machinery of the League of Nations should be used. This was a considerable step forward, but four days later, M. Molotov—Litvinov's successor—made it clear that Russian policy was steering a new course. In a speech to the Soviet Supreme Council he went out of his way to underline the suspicions expressed by Stalin in his speech of March 10th. Might it not turn out that Britain's endeavours to resist aggression in some regions would serve as "no obstacle to the unleashing of aggressions in other regions. . . . We must therefore be vigilant." Britain had given guarantees to five countries; but the Soviet Union cannot undertake commitments in regard to the five countries mentioned unless it receives a guarantee in regard to the three countries on its North Western frontier." In addition, he went out of his way to stress that although there had been difficulties in trade negotiations between Russia and Germany—particularly over a German offer to grant the Soviet a 200,000,000 mark credit—"to judge by certain signs it is not precluded that the negotiations may be resumed." Finally, he quoted Stalin's "chestnut" caution. In general it was an unhelpful and somewhat sinister contribution to the negotiations.

Mr. Chamberlain, however, resolved to try a fresh approach. On the 12th of June Mr. William Strang, the head of the Central European Department of the Foreign Office, was sent to reinforce Sir William Seeds our Ambassador in Moscow. Mr. Lloyd George, in condemning this move, has chosen more than once to call Mr. Strang "a third-rate official" but the epithet is both insulting and inaccurate. Mr. Strang had been at Mr. Chamberlain's side all through the Czech crisis,



CRISIS CONSTITUTIONAL--ST. JAMES'S PARK, EASTER 1939

Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain taking one of their morning walks in the Park with detectives in the background prior to a Cabinet meeting (the first to be held on an Easter Monday since the War) on the Albanian crisis.

and was therefore more than usually competent to act as his special envoy now. But Mr. Strang enjoyed the additional advantage of having previous experience of negotiations in Moscow when he accompanied Mr. Eden on his mission there in March 1935. If the Russians meant business Mr. Strang was the reinforcement they needed; he was particularly qualified to work out the details of any compromise that might have to be reached in order to include the Baltic States within the guarantee system. The idea that Mr. Chamberlain or Lord Halifax should have gone to Moscow personally, is ill-founded. If the Italian and German visits were to become precedents, confidence in the unparalleled quality and status of our diplomatic service would have been undermined, and a principle would have developed that our ambassadors were merely employed for routine matters, and that all questions of major policy required direct contact between the heads of the Governments of the day. This was not the case, and many critics of the tendency which had been growing up within the past few years, largely as a result of the annual visits of leading statesmen to Geneva, were relieved when they found that Mr. Chamberlain continued to rely upon our accredited diplomatic representatives as the crisis deepened. When all the facts are known there is little doubt but that Sir William Seeds will be found to have acquitted himself with the same distinction as did Sir Neville Henderson in Berlin and Sir Howard Kennard in Warsaw.

In a statement to Parliament on June 7th Mr. Chamberlain showed himself to be fully alive to Russia's strategic interests, although he had to admit that he "had received several communications from the Governments of Finland, Esthonia and Latvia indicating that in view of their intention to maintain strict neutrality they did not wish to receive a

guarantee as a result of the present negotiations." The formula which Mr. Strang was believed to have taken with him, while avoiding all specific reference to the Baltic States, contained an automatic guarantee of mutual assistance not only against a direct attack on any one of the signatory Powers but also against any kind of aggression that it might consider constituted a threat to its vital interests. Mr. Churchill in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on June 8th urged that it was asking too much of the small states to commit themselves at this stage before the Triple Alliance had been signed. "It is sufficient for the three great Powers to declare that the invasion or subversion of the Baltic States by the Nazis would be an unfriendly act, in the full diplomatic sense of the term, against the Grand Alliance," but it is difficult to see that Mr. Chamberlain could have cut the knot as easily as that.

Mr. Churchill's solution did not give full weight to the Baltic Powers' fears of offending Germany. Their Governments and peoples were genuinely afraid of Russia and the spread of Communism. "It is widely believed," one commentator wrote, "that in the last resort they would prefer German protection to the presence of Soviet troops on their soil which if it did not actually end in a permanent occupation, might well result in the overthrow of the existing regimes." It was precisely the same with the Poles who felt, with ample justice as events have proved, that once Russian troops had set foot on the soil of White Russia and the Polish Ukraine nothing on earth would remove them. The active negotiations for the Pact were to run on until July 27th by which time Russia was still no nearer accepting Mr. Strang's formula. Poland's attitude according to Moscow was understandable only on the assumption that it "acted on British and French instructions." There was endless

dispute over the meaning of indirect aggression. Mr. Chamberlain realized that only the increasing of the pressure of the general situation could break the political deadlock. The decision at the end of July to send French and Military Missions, and the final Soviet defection in August were the outcome of greater events than the pedantic and tortuous conferences with the Kremlin.

When Mr. Chamberlain explained the Polish guarantee on April 3rd, he described it as a "tremendous departure from anything which this country has undertaken hitherto" as "a new point—I would say a new epoch—in the course of our foreign policy. To have departed from our traditional ideas in this respect so far, constitutes a portent in British policy so momentous that I think it is safe to say it will have a chapter to itself when the history books come to be written." On the home front two consequences were to be seen in the setting up of a Ministry of Supply, and in the decision to impose conscription on all men between the ages of twenty and twenty-one. In proposing this measure in peace time Mr. Chamberlain had necessarily to go back on reiterated pledges he had given that the voluntary system would be maintained. "We are not at war now," he admitted, "but," he added, "when every country is straining all its resources to be ready for war, when confidence in the maintenance of peace is being undermined and everyone knows that if war were to come we might pass into it in a matter not of weeks, but of hours, no one can pretend that this is peace time in any sense in which the term could fairly be used." In such an emergency it was not fair that some should be called upon to make a greater sacrifice than others, or that the flower of our young manhood should be made to meet the devastation of modern war without adequate training. In elaborating these arguments Mr. Cham-

berlain commanded the support of an overwhelming majority in the country as a whole, and, although the Labour Party subjected conscription to their general opposition and a running fire of criticism, it did not succeed in destroying the formidable impression of unity and purpose made by the British decision on Continental opinion. For that was its main significance and purpose. Conscription was far more important to the French General Staff as a symbol for the future than as a means of producing any immediate increase of our effective man power. As its terms came to be analysed it was soon realized that in the event of emergency in the next few weeks, it involved the addition not of a million but of approximately 200,000 men. All the same Mr. Chamberlain had crossed this Rubicon, and, in Britain, it was a deep turbulent river.

Conscription coincided with diplomatic developments of the first magnitude. Following the Albanian coup President Roosevelt had made yet another of his impressive incursions into the European arena. On April 15th he addressed to Hitler and Mussolini Notes asking for assurances that their armies would not invade for at least ten years thirty independent countries in Europe and the Near East which he named. The British Government at once welcomed the President's "statesmanlike initiative" in an official statement, and Mr. Chamberlain in subsequent speeches cordially endorsed his proposals. It should be noted that Mr. Chamberlain was able, through maintaining close contact with Mr. Kennedy, the American Ambassador to London, to establish a more effective co-ordination of diplomatic effort between London and Washington than had been experienced for many years. Mr. Kennedy—a splendid example of the vigorous leadership that has sprung up during the Roosevelt ascendancy—at once

enjoyed Mr. Chamberlain's confidence, and the Prime Minister has undoubtedly kept him far more fully informed of British policy than the official routine requires. The Anglo-American Agreement owes a great deal both to Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Chamberlain, and represented a common-sense business arrangement that must have had a particular appeal for the two men, both of whom have a common origin and interest in commerce. Mr. Chamberlain's readiness to find practical application for Anglo-American understanding was throughout a potent factor for peace, and is now for victory.

Europe rallied to the President, but Mussolini, apart from abuse, decided to let Hitler answer on his behalf. Hitler began by questioning the states Mr. Roosevelt addressed, asking them whether they felt themselves to be menaced by Germany and whether they had any pre-knowledge of the President's message. The second question they all answered in the negative, but the first merely produced polite evasions. Then on April 28th he gave his formal reply in a speech to the Reichstag. This speech effectively launched the crisis that was to culminate four months later in war. In the first place he rejected with brutal cynicism all President Roosevelt's proposals out of hand. Then he announced that he had made proposals to the Polish Government that Danzig should return as a Free City into the framework of the Reich and that Germany should receive a Corridor within the Corridor in exchange for a twenty-five year non-aggression Pact and a recognition of existing Polish-German frontiers as ultimate.

It is not within the scope of this book to enter into any discussion of the merits of the Danzig dispute. There are certain clear facts about the Free City. It is ninety per cent German in population, but strategically it is the main artery of Poland's economic

system. In the oft quoted words of Hitler's spiritual ancestor, Frederick the Great—"who rules over the mouth of the Vistula and the City of Danzig will be more master of Poland than the King who rules there." If the issue of Danzig could be isolated, a clear conflict of interest and sentiment would emerge finding solution in its acquisition of membership in the Hanseatic League with the status of a Free City. But in the crisis of 1939 Danzig soon ceased to be the central theme. Europe would have enforced a peaceful solution of that particular German claim which many felt to be the best founded of all. Hitler gave the world to understand that his proposals had been rejected out of hand by the Poles, but on May 5th the Polish Government sent Hitler a Memorandum showing that he had been in receipt of Polish counter-proposals for over a month and had given no formal reply to them, and that apparently "the mere fact of the formulation of counter-proposals instead of the acceptance of the verbal German suggestions without alteration or reservation had been regarded by the Reich as a refusal of discussions." For Hitler the fact of the Anglo-Polish agreement without any consideration of its terms, was sufficient pretext for him to denounce his first great diplomatic agreement, the Ten-Year Polish-German Pact.

What were Hitler's motives for forcing this new quarrel to a head? Sir Nevile Henderson, in his Final Report, and the Blue Book on German-Polish Relations, offer some clues; the extremists round the Fuehrer and the eclipse of the moderates, economic necessities created by the Nazi system, and above all the Fuehrer's morbid brooding megalomania—these were all essential elements making for catastrophe; but in terms of what was diplomatically expedient Germany's war might as easily have been with Poland for ally and Russia for foe. At the end of

January von Ribbentrop was in Warsaw. It is now revealed that the German Foreign Minister made proposals to initiate a Ukrainian campaign. Stalin laughed at the idea in his speech of March 10th and insinuated that it was a figment of the Democracies' imagination; but there is little doubt that it was solemnly put forward and as solemnly turned down by Colonel Beck.¹ Poland's colonial claims were to be backed by the Axis in return for supporting German designs on Russia. Ribbentrop at a dinner in his honour, spoke of a firm understanding with Poland as an essential element of the Fuehrer's policy. Addressing the German Colony on January 26th, he said: "I can assure the Germans in Poland that the agreement of January 26th, 1934, has put a final end to enmity between our two peoples." But Poland's refusal to be a partner in plunder made Poland an obstacle to penetration anywhere, and the rallying ground for the champions of the war against Germany on two fronts. Hitler's concept of expansion was to capture a strategic base for further expansion. Poland fulfilled this condition, and was to be the key to the domination of Europe.

In estimating British policy as led by Mr. Chamberlain while these tremendous designs were in process of growth and were being duly reported to him by our various ambassadors, it is important to realize that Great Britain, though averse to the domination of Europe by any one Power, and the traditional protector of small and weak nationalities, has not automatically gone to war to prevent it. It is by no means an historical axiom that Britain should resist such a Power. Bismarck's domination of Europe we did not oppose; the post-war French hegemony we surveyed with little more than regret and irritation.

¹ This did much to alter Hitler's view with regard to Russo-German co-operation, which had always been favoured by powerful groups in both countries.

Our enmity has depended on the kind of domination involved—whether the aims of the Power in question were in fact limited to Europe, or whether they grew on what they fed on; whether they ultimately implied world domination and whether they made for political economic and social stability, or the reverse. On this criterion Hitler's handling of the Polish claims would be the decisive test as to whether Hitler's domination was tolerable in the sense that Bismarck's had been. Since so much was at stake Mr. Chamberlain resolved to give Hitler no excuse for provoking Britain's historic resistance.

Four days before the Reichstag speech, Mr. Chamberlain decided to send Sir Neville Henderson back to Berlin to enter on the terrible last phase of his mission. The Opposition at once seized on this decision as a sign that the Prime Minister was weakening in his purpose. Sir Neville they constantly attacked as an incorrigible "appeaser," whereas on the testimony of his astonishing dispatches he stood up to Hitler with enough bulldog determination to satisfy the most furious and fire-eating of Socialists. Sir Neville's return was, of course, an extremely wise move, and enabled the British Government to maintain contact with Berlin during a vital phase of the crisis; to have kept him in England on grounds of prestige and dignity would have been to sacrifice the substance for the shadow. Hitler, in the course of his speech of April 28th, denounced the Anglo-German naval agreement—"Since England to-day, both by the Press and officially, upholds the view that Germany should be opposed under all circumstances, and confirms this by the policy of encirclement known to us, the basis for the naval treaty has been removed."

An official statement was at once issued from Whitehall to let it be known that if Germany really

felt herself encircled or threatened, Great Britain would be willing to offer her an assurance against aggression. It also denied that the British guarantee had caused the Polish attitude to stiffen: it was because Poland was firm in the first place that the guarantee had subsequently been given.

On May 11th in an extremely important speech to Women Conservatives at the Albert Hall, Mr. Chamberlain amplified the British attitude. The suggestions that we wished to isolate Germany, to stand in the way of the legitimate expansion of her trade in Central and South Eastern Europe, and to plan some combination against her with the idea of making war upon her, were "simply fantastic." "On the other hand I want to make it equally plain that we are not prepared to sit by and see the independence of one country after another successively destroyed." The gesture and warning alike came well on this, the day of our signature of the Anglo-Roumanian Trade Pact. As for Danzig, "while our assurances to Poland are clear and precise, and although we should be glad to see the differences between Poland and Germany amicably settled by discussions, and although we think they could and should be so settled, if an attempt were made to change the situation by force in such a way as to threaten Polish independence, that would inevitably start a general conflagration in which this country would be involved."

In view of the sustained firmness of the Anglo-French attitude, Hitler's next move was to grease the Axis and conclude a military pact with Italy. This development occasioned some concern in London, and there was some uncertainty whether Mussolini in demanding a *quid pro quo* for his acquiescence in Hitler's Danzig demands might not try further to upset the balance in the Mediterranean. This suspicion was heightened when the usually suave and

polite Count Grandi at a party at the Italian Embassy to celebrate the pact made, at the Duce's express request, an outrageous speech contrary to all diplomatic etiquette. Among other things he observed that there was a great deal of midsummer madness in Europe and outside it, in the effort to save old injustices by the help of new mistakes and new presumptions.

Mr. Chamberlain was subjected to pressure to deal with this insolence in the terms it deserved, but with considerable wisdom he refrained, and a significant commentary on Italy's motives for signing the military pact at this time has been given by Mr. Victor Gordon-Lennox, the well-known Diplomatic Correspondent.¹ "Last May it was already evident," he writes, "that Signor Mussolini had been informed of the German determination to effect 'a radical solution of the Polish question' during the present year, even, if necessary, by recourse to war. I feel fairly confident that it was this knowledge which induced Signor Mussolini to conclude the Italo-German military alliance, whereby he obtained a pledge from Hitler that no action would be taken which might involve both countries in war, and no new treaties would be concluded with other Powers without prior consultation." It was no doubt, the recognition of some such orientation of Italian policy that led Mr. Chamberlain to adopt, a few days afterwards, a cautious attitude to the problem of Italian material left in Spain. The Opposition were pressing him to invoke or even denounce the Anglo-Italian Agreement, but Mr. Chamberlain replied, "taking all these circumstances into account His Majesty's Government do not propose to make representations to the Italian Government unless the situation should be materially altered by any new development."

¹ *Daily Telegraph*, October 30th, 1939.

These Fabian tactics, however, met perhaps with even more notable success in Mr. Chamberlain's policy towards the Far East. Cruel war had been raging with unabated violence for two years. The Japanese had overrun vast areas of China—far larger than they could effectively control, and involving the maintenance of ever widening lines of communication. The frustration of the Japanese led to a search among the army leaders for scapegoats. Efforts to impose on the conquered Chinese a new Japanese currency failed completely, and by the summer of 1939 a campaign was in full swing to concentrate the blame for this natural and inevitable failure upon sinister British Banking interests. Nothing less than the complete removal of every Briton and every British investment from the Far East was demanded. This, added to the intense provocation of the Japanese blockade of the Chinese ports, the paralysing of Shanghai, the destruction of Canton and other Chinese cities, was calculated to produce a situation of the utmost gravity. The Japanese consistently developed their aggressions and provocations in ratio to European unrest.

It was therefore not wholly an accident that the Japanese military authorities enforced a blockade of the important British Concession at Tientsin to coincide with a rapid deterioration in the local situation at Danzig. British nationals leaving the Concession on business were from henceforth subjected to gross indignities by Japanese sentries at the barriers, and reports kept coming through of strippings and maltreatment. Chinese traders were not allowed to enter with supplies and some were shot trying to do so, but later several British ships were allowed to pass through unchallenged with provisions. The actual pretext for the blockade was the British refusal to surrender four Chinese accused of complicity in a

murder in the Concession. But as a British Foreign Office statement of June 16th pointed out, "it is clear that the surrender of the four accused men is no longer regarded as the reason for the imposition of measures against the British Concession. What is demanded is that the British authorities co-operate with the Japanese in the construction of 'a new order' in the East by abandoning their pro-Chiang Kai-Shek policies . . . while therefore the position remains as described above, British circles cannot but take a most serious view of further demands."

Mr. Chamberlain from the outset, kept in closest touch with Paris and Washington, no action or policy was formulated without their knowledge and, where possible, advice. Sir Robert Craigie, British Ambassador in Tokyo, was instructed to take the whole matter up with the Japanese Foreign Minister. By the end of June Mr. Chamberlain was able to announce that conversations would begin in order to effect a full settlement of the Tokyo issue. In the meanwhile the British Consul-General in Shanghai had been requested, in view of impending Japanese attacks against the Treaty Ports of Wenchow and Foochow, to see that all British ships had left there by June 29th, and had replied stiffly that Japanese authorities were not entitled to exercise undue interference with the movement of British ships.

There is no need to pursue these episodes in detail, but from the point of view of Mr. Chamberlain it is sufficient to say that ably backed by our diplomatic representatives on the spot, he combined valour and discretion with a finesse worthy of a mind steeped in the inscrutable and subtle ways of the East. In a memorable speech at Cardiff, he at once gave the Japanese a warning, the substance of which he had no need to reiterate; its implications were clear even to the Tokyo militarists, and from henceforth, how-

ever tortuous and delicate the negotiations between Britain and Japan might be, the weapons of war were stored away safely in the cupboard. "If the issue can be confined," Mr. Chamberlain declared, "to the original source of dispute, it ought to be possible to settle it by negotiations. But I am bound to say that no Government can tolerate that its nationals should be subjected to such treatment. No British Government will submit to dictation from another Power as to its foreign policy. I trust I am right in supposing that the Japanese Government have no intention of condoning the brutal acts of its soldiers, and have no intention of challenging the rights and interests of the British people in China."

By the end of July the Tokyo talks had produced a formula whereby we recognized that as long as hostilities were in progress the Japanese had "special requirements for the purpose of safeguarding their own security." "This," explained Mr. Chamberlain, to a partly sceptical, partly admiring House of Commons, "has nothing to do with His Majesty's Government's China policy, but is a question of fact. The Japanese army had to provide for its own security and maintain order in the occupied areas." The talks on the local Tientsin issues could now begin or be postponed. Towards the end of August Mr. Chamberlain conceded the *prima facie* case for the release of the four Chinese to be tried in a court under Japanese control.

By then he had won the battle against time. The balance of Europe was about to be overthrown, and in the process the British position in the Far East strengthened beyond all expectations; but that Britain was able to take the opportunity when it came was almost entirely due to Mr. Chamberlain's masterly inaction and the clear vision of his resolve not to allow our relations with Japan to culminate in

a deadlock from which there was no release short of war. A lesser man would have been goaded into irrevocable folly by the sting of insults and provocations. They were "intolerable," and he freely admitted to Parliament that they made his "blood boil," but his head remained cool. Mr. Chamberlain throughout, saw the problem whole, and against the background of the European menace.

TO WAR AND BEYOND

ON June 29th, in view of the increasing international tension, Lord Halifax made the most complete analysis of British policy towards Germany since the guarantee to Poland. "Our first resolve is to stop aggression." As for the encirclement of Germany, Germany was in fact isolating herself. As for *Lebensraum*, this problem was not solved simply by acquiring more territory; that process might indeed make it more acute. The world was too closely knit economically for any one country to hope to profit at the expense of its neighbours. As for colonies, we were ready to extend the principles of the Open Door. "British policy rests on twin foundations of purpose. One is determination to resist force. The other is our recognition of the world's desire to get on with the constructive work of building peace." This one statement raised the issue of Anglo-German relations above Party, and there was unanimous support for it.

Mr. Chamberlain, on July 10th, underlined the Halifax declaration by a specific statement on Danzig. If any attempt were made to settle its future status by unilateral action and surreptitious methods, or to present Europe with a *fait accompli*, or to brand Poland as the aggressor for any effort on her part to restore the situation, "the issue could not be considered as a purely local matter involving the rights and liberties of the Danzigers, which, incidentally, are in no way threatened, but would at once raise grave

issues affecting Polish national existence and independence." Nothing could have been more explicit in the whole history of diplomatic definitions than the combined Halifax-Chamberlain statements of June 29th and July 10th. Yet on July 14th we read that Sir Neville Henderson was discussing with the German Foreign Office a report that Herr Hitler was convinced that England would never fight over Danzig. In spite of all Sir Neville's efforts, Hitler, it seems, was never wholly persuaded, for did not Ribbentrop, that phenomenon who could speak with English aristocrats in their native tongue, know otherwise?

There was a lull in the general situation up to the moment when Parliament adjourned—which was what some members, including Mr. Churchill, feared. There was accordingly an extremely lively and embittered debate as to whether Parliament should remain in session. Mr. Chamberlain was reduced to making the matter into a vote of confidence. In the course of his two statements summing up our position he refused to enter into any argument on the difficulties in the way of Anglo-Soviet agreement, nor would he supply any history of the negotiations, but he set out with absolute frankness the reasons why Britain, France and Russia had failed to reach agreement. First there was the failure to find any acceptable means of covering indirect aggression, though all recognized that this might be as dangerous as a direct attack. Secondly, the Russian formula appeared to the French and British to encroach on the independence of other states; and thirdly, although they might well have had a provisional agreement at an early date as they had with Poland and Turkey, Russia preferred to initial nothing that was not complete. So, with what was really unprecedented goodwill and good faith we were sending out a military mission to hold conversations before political agreement had been



THE KING AT No. 10

This historic visit took place on September 1st, 1939 and was designed to relieve the Prime Minister of the necessity of seeking an audience of His Majesty at a time when all his attention was concentrated on the crisis that culminated two days later in war. There was no precedent for a visit on formal business by the King to the Prime Minister's official residence.

reached. Moscow had let us know that with the military experts once at work political differences should not be insoluble. Mr. Chamberlain's insight into Russian methods and motives made this the expression of a hope rather than any convinced opinion; it did not escape him what the real difficulties were.

At the time of Litvinov's resignation rumours were current that Stalin contemplated a complete reversal of Soviet foreign policy in the direction of understanding with Germany. It was widely noted that Hitler in his Reichstag speech of January 30th, and his reply to President Roosevelt on April 28th, deliberately refrained from his customary attacks on Russia and Bolshevism.¹ There was diplomatic contact between the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin and the Wilhelmstrasse at the end of April. Throughout July unofficial trade talks were going on with German representatives in Moscow, and on July 21st it was announced that official negotiations had begun in Berlin. However, the announcement on August 20th that a trade and credit agreement had actually been signed came as a surprise to London. *Pravda's* comment, which the British Press failed to feature, was that the agreement might be "a serious step in the direction of an eventual improvement not only of the economic but also of the political relations between the Soviet Union and Germany." In July there were rumours that the egregious von Papen was in Moscow. All these things and more Mr. Chamberlain must have known. Why, then, did he send the military mission? Partly perhaps to convince British opinion that we had in fact left nothing undone up to the last moment; partly to allow Stalin to commit himself as far as possible to the Allies and

¹ The hopes aroused by the preliminary Russo-German contact of February are the key to Hitler's forbearance.

so make the intended defection appear in its true light as treachery; and partly to be ready for any emergency. Stalin perhaps had not finally made up his mind, and might at the last moment decide to snap back into his orthodox anti-Nazi position.

The Military Mission arrived in Moscow on August 11th. On this same day Ribbentrop met Ciano in Salzburg, and, as far as can be ascertained, failed to inform him of the projected Soviet Alliance. On August 20th Herr Förster, the Danzig Nazi leader declared that "the return of Danzig to the Reich is imminent." The next day Mr. Chamberlain returned to London after the briefest of holidays inundated as it was with ever more alarming dispatches and reports, and late that night the wireless announced the portentous news that Germany and Russia had decided to conclude a non-aggression Pact, and that von Ribbentrop was going to Moscow to complete the negotiation. The perfidy of Stalin's action cannot be overstressed, but treachery seems to be inherent in Russian statecraft and indispensable to it. During the ten clear days the Military Missions had for discussions, the British did not, as far as is known, reveal any military secrets. If that was the Soviet objective in asking for military conversations, it seems to have failed. The Allied representatives sheltered behind a convenient lack of instructions.

On August 22nd the Cabinet met, and following it Mr. Chamberlain addressed an historic letter to Hitler. The quiet dignity, the inherent strength yet moderation of Mr. Chamberlain's appeal branded Hitler for all time if he failed to respond to it. "Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement," wrote Mr. Chamberlain, "it cannot alter Great Britain's obligation to Poland which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly, and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfil. It

has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made this position more clear in 1914 the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding." It would be dangerous for Hitler to think if hostilities once began that success on one front would mean an early end to them. "Having thus made our position perfectly clear, I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur." It was desired by neither and there was nothing in the Polish-German dispute in itself to justify it. He asked for a truce on both sides to lessen the immediate tension. If there was to be a final settlement there would have to be guarantees by other Powers. "At this moment I confess I see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war. In view of the grave consequences to humanity which may follow the action of their rulers, I trust your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you."

This letter was to be Mr. Chamberlain's last direct approach to Hitler; and it epitomizes the whole of his struggle for Peace. It puts the justice of his plea beyond challenge. What was Hitler's response, apart from the formal reply? We see in Sir Nevile Henderson's dispatch received in London on August 24th, that he first of all tried to postpone receipt of the letter. When at last the interview was arranged Sir Nevile gathered that the "atmosphere was likely to be most unfriendly." He was right. Sir Nevile's account of that interview is a damning commentary on Hitler's fitness to act as Leader of a civilized community. While Sir Nevile explained the letter with studious moderation, "Herr Hitler was excitable and

uncompromising. He made no long speeches, but his language was violent and exaggerated both as regards England and Poland. . . . I contested every point and kept calling his statements inaccurate, but the only effect was to launch him on some fresh tirade . . . most of the conversation was recrimination. . . . Herr Hitler observed in reply to my repeated warnings that direct action by Germany would mean war, that Germany had nothing to lose and Britain much. . . . Surely some solution was possible; could not direct contact be made with the Poles again? Herr Hitler's retort was that so long as England gave Poland 'a blank cheque' Polish unreasonableness would render any negotiations impossible. I denied the 'blank cheque' but this only started Herr Hitler off again."

From henceforth Mr. Chamberlain could play no other role than that of chorus to a Greek Tragedy. Between August 24th, when Parliament was recalled, and September 3rd, he made no less than five statements all of which were in effect summaries of the feverish negotiations going on in Berlin. After the obvious failure of his letter of August 22nd Mr. Chamberlain wisely made no further attempt at direct intervention. None the less the Muse of History seems obstinately determined that the retiring Mr. Chamberlain must be made to walk in the limelight. His straightforward and unadorned narrative once again works up to a tremendous climax. On August 24th he described how Hitler, through the Press, had deliberately widened the scope of the Danzig negotiations by a violent Press attack on the Polish Government, and a blank assertion that the Corridor was inextricably bound up with Danzig. Once more atrocity stories were dragged out to play their part. Mr. Chamberlain praised the calm and self-restraint of the Polish statesmen in the face of this campaign,

and did his utmost to keep the door to Peace ajar by asserting that "they have always been ready, as I am sure they would be ready now, to discuss differences with the German Government, if they could be sure that those discussions would be carried on without threats of force or violence, and with some confidence that, if agreement were reached, its terms would be respected afterwards permanently both in the letter and in the spirit."

Mr. Chamberlain revealed that German military preparations were on such a scale that the nation was now completely ready for war. At the beginning of the week the Government had word that German troops were beginning to move towards the Polish frontier. As a crisis of the first magnitude was approaching the Government must seek Parliament's approval for further defence measures. His reference to the German-Soviet Pact, though calling it a "surprise of an unpleasant character" and "highly disturbing," was wisely brief. At no stage has Mr. Chamberlain committed his country to a position which makes accommodation with Russia impossible; here again more impatient or less experienced leadership might have taken during these days some irrevocable decision. We claimed no special position for ourselves in Eastern Europe, he added, but, "if despite all our efforts to find the way of Peace—and God knows I have tried my best—if in spite of all that, we find ourselves forced to embark upon a struggle which is bound to be fraught with suffering and misery for all mankind, and the end of which no man can foresee, if that should happen, we shall not be fighting for the political future of a far away city in a foreign land; we shall be fighting for the preservation of those principles the destruction of which would involve the destruction of all possibility of peace and security for the peoples of the world."

The same evening the Emergency Powers Bill went through all its stages without a division, and the Prime Minister's motion to introduce the Bill without notice was accepted by 429 votes to 6.

Between August 26th and 28th Sir Neville Henderson was in London with a verbal as well as a written reply to Mr. Chamberlain's letter. This verbal reply was the outcome of an interview Hitler had requested on August 25th. Sir Neville has given it as his opinion that Hitler actually postponed military operations for a week as a result of Mr. Chamberlain's letter. His evidence for this is that certain orders coming into force on August 26th implied action on the night 25th-26th, "the fact may well be, as I imagine it is, that Herr Hitler had had in consequence of the Prime Minister's letter one last hesitation, and countermanded the orders of his army, whereas the other arrangements were allowed to proceed unchecked." He did not pause because he was afraid of war, but rather because he wanted to make one final effort to detach Britain from Poland. This is probably an accurate estimate of Hitler's motive, but Sir Neville's account of his interview on August 25th can only cause one to wonder on the mentality of a man who believed that such a fantastic hyperbole as he produced on that occasion could have ever deflected Mr. Chamberlain and the British Government from their course. The substance of the Fuehrer's offer was that "he accepts the British Empire, and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to place the power of the German Reich at its disposal . . . the Fuehrer repeats that he is a man of *ad infinitum* decisions by which he himself is bound, and that this is his last offer. Immediately after the solution of the German-Polish question he would approach the British Government with an offer."

Accordingly on August 29th, Mr. Chamberlain

spoke only the bare truth when he asserted that, although the catastrophe was not yet on us, the danger had not yet in any way receded. We had once more made it plain (presumably in the reply Sir Neville had taken back to Hitler), that our obligations to Poland would be carried out. He described measures taken to meet the emergency. "The British people are said sometimes to be slow to make up their minds, but, having made them up, they do not readily let go." Mr. Chamberlain's speech was made in the knowledge of Sir Neville's interview with Hitler late on the night of August 28th. Hitler had been asked to choose between a unilateral solution which would mean war as regards Poland or British friendship, and had replied that "his army was ready and eager for battle." But Sir Neville had brought with him a message from the Polish Government to the British Government that they were prepared to enter into direct discussions with Germany. Hitler's reply was that he could not answer at once whether he would negotiate directly with Poland.

At 7.15 p.m. on August 29th Sir Neville was informed that Hitler was ready to negotiate direct with Poland, but counted on the arrival of a Polish Plenipotentiary by August 30th. This second demand, Sir Neville remarked, "sounded like an ultimatum." This led to another stormy scene with Hitler and Ribbentrop, but at 4 a.m. the next day Sir Neville was reinforced by the British Government's instruction to tell Hitler it would be unreasonable to expect the British Government to produce a Polish representative in Berlin by August 30th. When on the night of 30th-31st Sir Neville had his fateful interview with Ribbentrop, elaborating the British Government's view, Ribbentrop's reply was "to produce a lengthy document which he read out in German at top speed." When Sir Neville asked for the text of its

sixteen points, he was told it was too late as a Polish representative had not arrived by midnight.

Yet in spite of this flagrant behaviour, the Poles on August 31st, through the good offices of the British Government, were ready to send their Ambassador to the Wilhelmstrasse to discuss details "as to where, with whom, and on what basis negotiations should be commenced." The Polish Ambassador, M. Lipski, was not received, however, until the evening of the 31st. Immediately after the interview the German Government broadcast the proposals. M. Lipski tried to make contact with Warsaw, but could not do so as all means of communication between Poland and Germany had been closed by the German Government. In the early hours of September 1st, the invasion of Poland began, and placards in London soon announced the bombing of Warsaw. Hitler's speech to the Reichstag and proclamation to the army, spoke with unbridled insolence of Polish aggression, "in order to put an end to this lunacy I have no other choice than to meet force with force from now on." Danzig was proclaimed part of the Reich.

But the last word was not with Hitler on that day. In a memorable speech Mr. Chamberlain described the drama of those last hours in Berlin, and his narrative remains one of the most damning indictments in all our Parliamentary annals. "The time has come," he observed, "when action rather than speech is required. Eighteen months ago in this House I prayed that the responsibility might not fall upon me to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear I may not be able to avoid that responsibility. But at any rate I cannot wish for conditions in which such a burden should fall upon me in which I should feel clearer than I do to-day where my duty lies. . . . Now that all the relevant

documents are being made public, we shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions.” He proceeded to outline the correspondence between the British Government and Hitler, which made clear “that Germany claimed to treat Poland as in the wrong because she had not entered upon discussions with Germany about a set of proposals of which she had never heard.” Sir Nevile Henderson had handed the German Government a document stating that unless Germany was prepared promptly to withdraw her forces from Polish territory Britain would without hesitation fulfil her obligations. He announced the complete mobilization of Army, Navy and Air Force, and significantly made particular references to his own satisfaction as well as the Government’s “that throughout these last days of crisis Signor Mussolini has also been doing his best to reach a solution.”

September 2nd was a day of indescribable tension. There was no time limit to the document Sir Nevile was handing to Hitler, and Poland had invoked the Treaty. No one knew what the next move would be, but Mr. Chamberlain was due to make a statement to Parliament at 6 p.m. The statement, however, was postponed for an hour or so, and the Lobbies were full of the wildest rumours. France was creating difficulties: Mussolini had intervened: Mr. Chamberlain would announce another Munich.

When at last Mr. Chamberlain did speak, the atmosphere was electric. We were waiting for the German reply; it had not yet been received. “It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which meanwhile has been put forward by the Italian Government that hostilities should cease

and that there should then immediately be a conference between the five Powers, Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy." But Great Britain, while appreciating Mussolini's efforts, was bound to take action unless the German forces were withdrawn from Polish territory. The Prime Minister after formally refusing to recognize Herr Förster's Danzig proclamation, then sat down.

When Mr. Greenwood, acting leader of the Opposition, rose to express grave disquiet at Mr. Chamberlain's statement, there was at once a tumult of support for him. Mr. Amery was heard to say from the Conservative benches: "Speak for England!" Passion ran so high that Mr. Chamberlain felt obliged to speak again. He referred to the difficulty of physical contact between our Allies by telephone as against contact with colleagues in a room, "but I should be horrified if the House thought for one moment that the statement I have made to them betrayed the slightest weakening either of this Government or the French Government in the attitude which we have already taken up." He shared members' distrust of "manœuvres of this kind," and felt certain he could make a statement of a definite kind to-morrow. "I anticipate there is only one answer I shall be able to give." He was right, for in any case the temper of the House on that night of September 2nd made any return to Appeasement impossible.

It must have been a poignant memory to the Prime Minister to think that but a year before, when he announced Munich to these selfsame Members, they cried: "God bless Mr. Chamberlain!" Now when war was being similarly held off for a few hours by a feeble flickering movement towards negotiation, they were almost ready to howl him down. But the truth was that with the accumulated strain of the preceding

months, heightened in the last days and even hours, war was almost a relief; decision one way or the other was what they craved. During this ordeal Mr. Chamberlain showed himself to be stronger than most of his fellow Members, and his powers of application and detachment were beyond the range of their sympathy. In holding out the hope of peace on September 2nd, and showing readiness to meet a wholly new situation if Germany gave the word and took the action necessary, Mr. Chamberlain gave evidence of a breadth of vision and greatness of mind truly Olympian.

But no sign came from Hitler, and so at 9 a.m. on Sunday, September 3rd, the two hours' ultimatum was sent—and expired. Britain was at war again. At 11.15 a.m. Mr. Chamberlain broadcast. His voice was firm and resonant. He spoke as only a man can do whose conscience is clear. He had worked for Peace after all had despaired. Even now there could have been an honourable settlement but Hitler would not have it—"his action shows convincingly that there is no chance of expecting that this man will ever give up his practice of using force to gain his will." So to his inspiring conclusion. "It is evil things that we shall be fighting against—brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution—and against them I am certain the right will prevail." Only to Parliament did he convey how deeply the sense of failure affected him. "Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins."

This confession was but a momentary spasm, and the man whose patience and perseverance had forced Hitler to reveal his aggressive designs in all their nakedness, did not fail to meet the impact of war decisions. On the Sunday afternoon came the

announcement of the new War Cabinet and of the inclusion of Mr. Winston Churchill in it as First Lord of the Admiralty. No move could have given more widespread satisfaction. Mr. Churchill's admission into the Government meant in effect the formation of a Chamberlain-Churchill Coalition which commanded the confidence of the whole nation. The War Cabinet itself, consisting as it did of nine members, including the Secretaries of the three Service Departments, was not exactly parallel to Mr. Lloyd George's War Cabinet, purely to frame policy and non-departmental. Mr. Chamberlain, in his desire to have the services of Mr. Hore-Belisha and Sir Kingsley Wood both for the general and the particular issues, probably felt that their personal capacity outweighed the danger of distracted counsel arising out of departmental wrangles within the Cabinet. Of course as the war develops the War Cabinet may well be modified. As yet the Opposition Labour or Liberal Parties—although accepting a Party truce—have both refused to join the Government officially. It is not inconceivable that the pressure of events will cause them to reverse their attitude. In the meanwhile, Mr. Chamberlain's War Cabinet is formidable. The inclusion of Lord Hankey with his unique experience as Secretary to the Cabinet from 1916 to 1937 was a statesmanlike decision, but above all the reconciliation between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill was the triumph of political common sense over personal animosities, and as such was recognized.

Mr. Churchill's immense prestige, capacity and experience in all that pertains to the conduct of war, invigorated an administration admittedly weary after eight consecutive years of office, during perhaps the most harassing decade in modern political history. And what of Mr. Chamberlain himself? The first phase of the war is over, and has resulted in a German

annihilation of Poland after a five weeks' campaign of devastating efficiency. Stalin, however, intervened at the critical moment when the Polish forces might well have rallied on inner lines, and helped himself to the Polish Ukraine and White Russia; with the result that the strategic value of Poland to Hitler has been completely lost. Ukrainian wheat and Roumanian oil are now of uncertain accessibility. Mr. Chamberlain's patience and resource are already winning decisive victories on the diplomatic front where Hitler was wholly confident of the result.

In what respect has Mr. Chamberlain so signally triumphed? First should be noted his ability to take advantage of Hitler's stupendous blunder in signing the German-Soviet Pact without making the slightest attempt to cover his lines of diplomatic communication. Mr. Chamberlain was at once able to exploit the natural revulsion among the other partners of the Anti-Comintern Pact and call upon the reserves of goodwill in Tokyo, Rome and Burgos, which his personal policy had stored there. It is neither fair nor accurate to say that Ribbentrop's mad initiative did all the work for him. Mr. Chamberlain would not have been able to take immediate advantage of the Diplomatic Revolution without the background of his own record. For anyone else with a more militant record a British rapprochement with Italy, Spain and Japan would have been subject to precisely the same objections and limitations as Ribbentrop's own coup. Then, secondly, by his insistent emphasis upon the value of agreement with Turkey and by the attainment of his objective in spite of intense German and Soviet pressure, he has eliminated war from the Mediterranean, and assured Britain's strategic position in the Near East. This he has achieved without exerting any undue influence on Ankara. Rightly he judged that Turkey must come to realize the worth

of a Pact with the Allies of their own volition if it was to have any enduring value. The result is that the way is now open for Italy and Turkey under British patronage to forget old grievances and to work for something like economic federation in the Balkans. This, no doubt, rests in the future, but for the prospect even, much credit is already due to Mr. Chamberlain.

Thirdly, he has succeeded in guiding a united Commonwealth into war—and that is an achievement of the first magnitude. The Statute of Westminster has undoubtedly encouraged centrifugal forces in the Empire, making it increasingly difficult to anticipate with confidence a unanimous decision in favour of a war in which Great Britain was primarily engaged, but the clarity with which Mr. Chamberlain has consistently presented the British case set in action a gratifying rally of Imperial sympathy and support. Even in Africa the Smuts Government is stronger than the pre-war Hertzog-Smuts Coalition. The Nationalists were stronger as nationalists than as advocates of neutrality; and if there are the elements of unrest in India, the war is only the pretext for their expression now rather than in the near future, for the problem of India is not essentially altered. Then, on the home front Mr. Chamberlain has no reason to be dissatisfied with his handiwork. The sins, if such they be, of his Government are those of commission—not of omission—based upon the wholly justifiable premise that we would be engaged in total war from the outset. Captain Liddell Hart had estimated £100,000,000 air-raid damage and 250,000 casualties in London in the first week. That the war is still essentially a diplomatic war must not be made grounds for criticizing Mr. Chamberlain for an over-emphasis on home defence. The evidence suggested, and still suggests, that the elaborate precautions are necessary.

In the actual war operations, the three Services have already given formidable account of themselves, and Mr. Chamberlain, responsible as he is for the ultimate strategical questions, is able to point to the most effective collaboration with our French ally. A Supreme War Council consisting of Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier and the Allied Defence Chiefs, has already met twice, once in France and once in England, is functioning smoothly and is in itself an invaluable safeguard against the disastrous quarrels that occurred in the last war between the politicians and the soldiers. In addition, a unified war command has been established for the British and French armies. Mr. Chamberlain has not allowed the Entente to be limited to a sentiment; for him it has first and foremost a practical context.

Above all the very "toughness of fibre" to which Mr. Churchill paid tribute, and those very qualities of endurance which made Mr. Chamberlain cling on to peace by appeasement when nearly all hope had been given up, will serve him now as the leader of a nation at war. The period of comparative inaction has naturally given rise to reflection, and what are conveniently termed "war aims" have loomed large on the political horizon. A speech by Hitler on October 6th threw down certain nebulous peace plans and vague assurances into the arena of world controversy. Mr. Lloyd George in particular, was urging on the Prime Minister the increasingly popular idea of "a Conference before the war starts."

On October 12th Mr. Chamberlain used one of his regular war statements to Parliament, not simply to reply to Hitler, but to put the British position in the struggle into its full perspective. The plain truth was, he confessed, that after our past experience it was no longer possible to rely upon the unsupported word of the present German Government. Whatever the issue

of the struggle it meant deep changes leaving their mark on every field of men's thought and action. For ourselves we sought no material advantage. "We desire nothing from the German people which should offend their self-respect. We are not aiming only at victory, but rather looking beyond to the laying of a foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of every succeeding generation. I am certain that all the peoples of Europe, including the people of Germany, long for peace, a peace which will enable them to live their lives without fear, and to devote their energies and their gifts to the development of their culture, the pursuit of their ideals and the improvement of their material prosperity."

Thus spoke the man who went to Munich, the man who in a prophetic moment likened his lot to that of the younger Pitt. The lesson of his struggle for peace has not been lost upon us. Whatever the stormy future holds for him and the nation he leads, he has already deserved well of it and still commands its confidence in the antique role of Fabius Maximus, of whom it was written "*unus homo cunctando nobis restituit rem.*"

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